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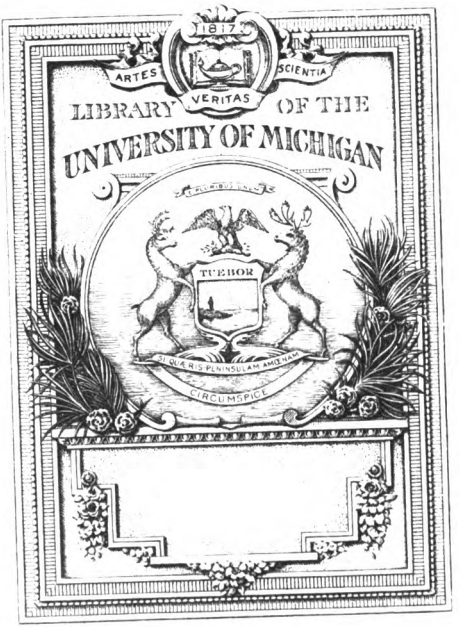

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VOL. 3328.

BISMARCK.

HIS REFLECTIONS AND REMINISCENCES.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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BISMARCK

THE MAN AND THE STATESMAN

BEING

THE REFLECTIONS AND REMINISCENCES

OF OTTO PRINCE VON BISMARCK

WRITTEN AND DICTATED BY HIMSELF AFTER
HIS RETIREMENT FROM OFFICE

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF

A. J. BUTLER,
LATE FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

WITH TWO PORTRAITS.

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IN THREE VOLUMES. — VOL. II.

LEIPZIG
BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ
1899.

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BISMARCK.

CHAPTER XI.

THE INTERMEDIATE YEARS.

DURING this period Prince Hohenzollern and Rudolf von Auerswald suggested to the Regent that I should be appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs. The result of that proposal was a sort of conference at the palace attended by the Prince, Auerswald, Schleinitz, and myself. The Regent introduced the discussion by calling upon me to sketch out the programme which I should approve. I expounded it plainly on the lines which I afterwards followed as minister, pointing out that the weakest side of our policy was the feeble attitude towards Austria which had prevailed since Olmütz, and especially of late years during the Italian crisis. If we could accomplish our German task in agreement with Austria, so much the better. But this would not be possible until the conviction had gained ground in Vienna that in the opposite case we should shrink from neither rupture nor war. The *rapprochement* with Russia, which was so desirable

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for the accomplishment of our policy, could be more easily preserved by acting against Austria than with her. But even in the latter case it did not seem to be impossible, in the light of the experience I had gained at St. Petersburg of the Russian Court and the influences prevailing there. The Crimean war and the Polish complications left us with a balance in hand which, if skilfully used, would enable us to come to an understanding with Austria without breaking with Russia. I was only afraid that the understanding with Austria might come to grief on account of the exaggerated idea prevalent there of the greatness of their own power and the smallness of the Prussian; until, at anyrate, Austria was thoroughly convinced that we were seriously prepared, if necessary, even for rupture and war. Our policy at Vienna during the last ten years had removed all belief in any such possibility; they had grown to regard the basis of Olmütz as permanent, and they either failed to notice or had forgotten that the convention of Olmütz had its chief justification in the temporary disadvantage of our position caused by the dispersal of our cadres, and by the fact that at the time of that convention the whole weight of Russian power had fallen into the scale of Austria, which since the Crimean war was no longer the case. But Austria was just as exacting in her policy towards us in 1856 as at the time when the Emperor Nicholas helped her against us. I maintained that our submission to the Austrian illusion recalled the experiment of fixing a hen to the spot by drawing a chalk line in front of it. Austrian confidence, a skilful use of the press, and a plentiful supply of secret service money enabled Count Buol to keep up the

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Austrian phantasmagoria and to ignore the strong position in which Prussia would be placed as soon as she was ready to break through the witchcraft of the chalk line. The Regent knew perfectly well what I meant by the reference to Austrian secret funds.[1]

After I had developed my views, Schleinitz was called upon to bring his forward. He did this by a reference to the will of Frederick William III. thus skilfully touching a chord which never failed to find a response in the mind of the Regent. He described the anxieties and dangers which threatened us from the West, from Paris, and at home, if our relations with Austria, in spite of all justifiable grounds for sensitiveness, failed to be maintained. The dangers of a combination between Russia and France, which even at that time was openly discussed, were set forth, and the possibility of an alliance between Prussia and Russia was said to be condemned by public opinion. It was characteristic of the Regent that, as soon as Schleinitz had spoken the last word of a fluent and evidently carefully-prepared speech, he at once declared in a lucid statement that in accordance with the traditions of his ancestors he decided in favour of the minister von Schleinitz. This brought the discussion to a speedy conclusion.

The rapidity with which he had made his decision as soon as the minister had uttered his last word led me to suppose that the whole *mise en scène* had been arranged beforehand, and had been carried out according to the wish of the Princess, so as to preserve some appearance of regard to the opinions of Prince Hohen-

[1] See vol. I. pp. 264-6.

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zollern and Auerswald, although even at that time she was not in agreement with them or with their inclination to strengthen the cabinet by adding me to it.

The policy of the Princess, which had considerable weight with her husband and the minister, was determined, as it seemed to me, rather by special dislikes than by any positive aims. Her objects of dislike were Russia, Louis Napoleon, with whom I was suspected of keeping up relations, and myself, on account of my inclination to an independent opinion and my refusal to present the illustrious lady's opinions to her husband as my own. Her likes were of a similar character. Herr von Schleinitz was politically her creature, a courtier who depended on her without any political opinion of his own.

The Prince of Hohenzollern, who was convinced that the Princess and Schleinitz were stronger than he, soon withdrew from all active participation in affairs, although he bore the name of Minister-President until 1862. The nominal leadership then also passed to Auerswald, and during the rest of my stay in Berlin I was on a very pleasant footing with him. He had a special charm of manner besides unusual political gifts, and two years afterwards, when I became Minister-President, he lent me his kindly assistance, especially in combating the Crown Prince's anxieties and scruples as to the future of our country, which were instilled into him from England in opposition to me as a friend of Russia, and which afterwards led to the *pronunciamiento* of Dantzig. On his deathbed[1] he begged the Crown Prince to come to him, warned him earnestly against the dangers which his

[1] R. v. Auerswald died January 15, 1866.

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opposition might cause the monarchy, and besought the Prince to cling to me.[1]

In the summer of 1861 a quarrel had arisen within the ministry which is described in the following letter of June 27, from von Roon, the Minister of War:[2]

"Berlin: June 27, 1861.

"I suppose that you are acquainted with the general features of the Homage question, which has become so critical.† It is almost ripe for an explosion. The King cannot give way without ruining himself and the Crown for ever. Nor can the majority of the ministers yield; if they did they would slit open their own immoral bellies and commit political suicide. They are forced to be, and to remain, disobedient. Hitherto I, who have taken up an entirely opposite position on this burning question, and (Edwin) Manteuffel have had the greatest difficulty in preventing the King from giving way. He would do it if I advised it, but I pray that God will take away the use of my tongue before it gives assent. But I stand alone—quite alone, for to-day Edwin Manteuffel is put under arrest.[3] It was not until yesterday that the King permitted me to look out for other ministers. He holds the gloomy view that, except Stahl and Co., he will find no one who judges the homage with the oath of allegiance to be admissible.

[1] Cf. *Aus dem Leben Theodor von Bernhardis*, VI. 227, 228, 234.

[2] *Bismarck-Jahrbuch*, VI. 194 &c.

† The King of Prussia had usually indicated his accession by receiving formal homage. William I. ultimately decided on coronation, but put on the crown with his own hands.

[3] On account of a duel with Twesten as author of the pamphlet *Was uns noch retten kann.*

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"Now I ask you, do you regard the ancient traditional hereditary homage as an attack on the constitution? If you answer my question with Yes, I shall have made a mistake in assuming you were of my opinion; but if you agree with me and think this view is mere *doctrinaire* humbug, resulting from political engagements and political party-grouping when our dear comrades think that they are not in position, you will have no objection to entering the King's council and solving the homage question in correct fashion. Then you will also find means of setting out without delay on your proposed holiday and sending me word by telegraph immediately. The words 'Yes, I am coming,' are sufficient; better still if you can add the date of your arrival. Schleinitz goes under any circumstances, quite independently of the homage question; that much is certain. But the question is whether you will have to take over his portfolio or Schwerin's. His Majesty seems more inclined to the latter than the former. But that is *cura posterior*. Our business is to convince the King that even without advertising a change of system he can find such a ministry as he requires. I have also addressed similar questions to President von Möller and to von Selchow, but am still without an answer. It is a hopeless state of things! The King suffers terribly. His nearest relations are against him, and counsel a rotten peace. God grant that he may not give way! If he did we should be steering under full sail into the morass of parliamentary government.

"I dread all business excitement, for the accumulated burdens together with this political worry are almost crushing me; still, a good horse may break down but does not give in. Therefore, let my business troubles

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excuse the shortness of these lines. Only one word more: I have broken down the bridge behind me and must therefore go, if the King gives way; but this is really a matter of course.

"This letter is to reach you by the English courier: so Schlieffen promises. Send me an immediate answer by telegraph."

I answered on July 2:

"Your letter sent by the English courier arrived here yesterday in storm and rain, and disturbed me in my pleasant anticipation of the quiet time I intended to spend in Reinfeld with Kissinger, and afterwards in Stolpmünde. Torn by affectionate feelings for young capercailzie on the one hand and the return to wife and children on the other, your order 'to horse' struck me as a discordant note. I have become indolent, weary, and dispirited since I lost my foundation of good health. But to business! As to the homage quarrel, I scarcely understand how it can have become so important for both sides. There is not the least doubt in my own mind that the King does nothing repugnant to the Constitution in accepting the homage in the traditional manner. He has the right to receive homage from each individual among his subjects, and from every corporation in the land, whenever and wherever he pleases, and if anyone denies my Sovereign a right which he is willing and able to exercise, I feel myself bound to assert it, even though I am not convinced of the practical importance of its exercise. In accordance with this view I telegraphed to Schlieffen that I consider the 'title of possession,' on the basis of which a new ministry is to be established, as lawful, and regard the refusal of the other party and

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the importance it attaches to preventing the act of homage as mere *doctrinaire* ill-temper. When I added that I 'am not acquainted with the lie of the rest of the property' I did not mean by that the persons and capacities with whom we should have to do business, but rather the programme on the basis of which we should have to work. Therein, in my opinion, lies the difficulty. My impression is that the chief fault of our policy hitherto has been this: it has been Liberal in Prussia and Conservative in foreign parts; we have esteemed the rights of our King too cheaply and those of foreign princes too highly. This is a natural result of the dualism between the constitutional tendencies of the ministers and the legitimist direction which the personal will of his Majesty gave our foreign policy. I should not easily make up my mind to inherit from Schwerin, if only because I do not consider my present capital of health sufficient. But even were I to do so, I should still feel in internal affairs the need for a different colouring of our foreign policy. My belief is that nothing but a change in our 'foreign' attitude can liberate the position of the Crown in domestic matters from the pressure which it will otherwise be actually impossible to resist; though I have no doubt as to the sufficiency of the means for the purpose. The domestic steam must be at extremely high pressure, else it is impossible to understand how our public life could have been so disturbed by such trumpery stuff as Stieber, Schwark, Macdonald, Patzke, Twesten and the like; and in other countries no one will understand how the homage question could have blown up the cabinet. It will surely be thought that grievous misrule had so embittered the people against the authorities, that the flame was ready

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to burst forth at the first breath. Political unripeness has a good deal to do with this stumbling over mere threads; but during the last fourteen years we have been teaching the nation a taste for politics without satisfying its appetite, and it has to seek its nourishment in the sewers. We are almost as vain as the French; if we can talk ourselves into the belief that we are respected outside our country we are ready to put up with a good deal at home; but if we have the feeling that every little Würzburger despises and jeers at us, and that we must put up with it from fear, in the hope that the army of the *Reich* will protect us against France, then we find at home something wrong in every corner, and every booby of the press who opens his mouth against the government is in the right.† Not one of the royal houses from Naples to Hanover will thank us for our affection, and in their case we love our enemies in truly gospel fashion at the cost of the security of our own throne. I am faithful to my Prince to the very marrow, but as far as all the others are concerned I do not feel in a single drop of blood the least trace of obligation to raise a finger for them. I fear that this attitude of mine is so far removed from that of our most gracious master that he will scarcely consider me a suitable adviser for the Crown. Therefore, if he employs me at all, he will prefer to use me in internal affairs. But according to my view that makes no difference, for I do not believe that the collective government will produce any satisfactory results unless our attitude in foreign affairs becomes stronger and less dependent on dynastic sympathies. Our want

† "Ed un Marcel diventa
Ogni villan che parteggiando viene."

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of self-confidence causes us to seek in them a support which they cannot give us, and which we do not require. It is a pity on account of the elections that the split has taken just this form; the loyal and monarchical mass of electors will not understand a quarrel about homage, and the democracy will distort it. It would have been better to hold out firmly against Kühne in the military question, to break with the Chamber, dissolve it, and thus show the nation what is the King's position towards the people. Will the King be willing to adopt this measure in the winter when it would be suitable? I do not believe in good elections this time, although the homage ceremonies should give the King many opportunities of influencing them. But a timely dissolution after palpable excesses on the part of the majority is a very wholesome remedy, perhaps the best that can be obtained for restoring a healthy circulation.

"I cannot express myself fully in writing about a situation with which I am but insufficiently acquainted, nor do I like setting down on paper everything which I might wish to say. As I have received my leave of absence to-day, I shall set out on Saturday by water and hope to be at Lübeck Tuesday morning, and at Berlin in the evening. I cannot come earlier because the Emperor still wishes to see me. The English courier will take these lines back. Further details by word of mouth. Pray give my kindest regards to your wife.

"In true friendship, yours,

"v. BISMARCK." [1]

[1] Given in full in the Bismarck letters (6th ed.), p. 213 sqq. Now also in Roon's *Denkwürdigkeiten*, II.[4]

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I had not seen any newspapers for five days when I reached Lübeck at five o'clock in the morning on July 9, and I learnt from the Swedish "Ystädter" journal, which alone was procurable at the station, that the King and ministers had left Berlin, and the crisis was therefore apparently averted. On July 3 the King had issued the manifesto saying that he adhered to the original form of hereditary homage, but in view of the changes which had been made in the constitution of the monarchy under his brother's rule, he had determined, instead of holding the ceremony of homage, to revive the solemn coronation on which the hereditary dignity of the Sovereign was based. In a letter dated July 24, from Brunnen (Canton Schwyz), Roon described to me the course of the crisis.[1]

"I made a vow to answer your letter on the first rainy day, and unfortunately I am obliged to do so as early as to-day, with the help of a half-dry inkpot which, if I cannot fill it in any other way, will have to be held outside the window for a few minutes in order to help its deficiencies. Our constantly missing one another seems to be anything but providential, rather let us say most disastrous. The despatch from Frankfort, owing to the stupidity of the officials, did not reach me until the 17th after eight o'clock in the morning, and a few hours afterwards my reply, which had been sent immediately, was returned with the comment that it could not be delivered. That made me all the more anxious about my departure. But I could not put it off. Schleinitz, in the service of Queen Augusta, has done us a good deal of immediate harm. The swelling had come to a

[1] *Bismarck-Jahrbuch*, VI. 196 sqq.

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head. Schleinitz himself, convinced that the present system is untenable, has given in his resignation principally on that account, just as rats forsake a rotten ship. But both he and von der Heydt agreed in thinking that dead and used-up persons ought not to be resuscitated by the galvanic shock of a supposed martyrdom, and therefore they voted against me. Schleinitz, supported by the Queen and the Grand Duchess Helene, has conquered by the help of the revived coronation idea, for which the mantles had been ordered as early as February. The ill-disguised retreat was now begun, and the all but completed list of ministers placed *ad acta*. I am also much inclined to believe that Schleinitz, like the Queen, and even Prince Hohenzollern, believes in the speedy destruction of the present system of lies, and is inclined to further it. Schleinitz's resignation is in every respect an advance, although he does not take up the same *doctrinaire* position as Patow, Auerswald, and Schwerin. Apart from his impotence in action, his presence gave the ministry support from above. Their pet could not be allowed to fall; well, he has got to port. If Count Bernstorff is but half the man that many people maintain, this second wedge will be more efficacious than the first, else he will not remain in office four months. You will doubtless have heard from Manteuffel or Alvensleben that I have split with my comrades permanently on the homage question. If I still remain in this company, it is because the King insists upon it, and I, being exempt from all scruple under the present circumstances, can now go on fighting with my vizor up. It suits my nature better that these gentlemen shall *know* I am opposed to their prescriptions than that they should, as hitherto, only

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believe it. May God help us in future! I can do little more than remain an honest man; work in my own department, and do what is sensible. The greatest misfortune, however, in all this worry is the weariness and languor of our King. He is more than ever under the orders of the Queen and her accomplices. If he does not recover his physical vigour everything will be lost, and we shall totter on into the yoke of parliamentarism, the Republic, and the Presidency of Patow. I can see no means of safety whatever, unless the Lord our God help us. In the process of universal dissolution I can recognise only one organism with any power of resistance, and that is the army. To maintain this untainted is the problem which I regard as still soluble, but certainly only for a short time. It too will become plague-stricken if it does not get to action, unless healthy air is breathed into it from above, and that too becomes more difficult every day. If I am right in this, and I think I am, I cannot be blamed for continuing to serve in this company. I do not mean to say that another man could not fill my office with equal or superior insight and energy, but even the most capable person will require a year to find his way about, and—'dead men ride fast.' There is no need for me to assure anyone who knows me well how glad I should be to resign. There is much more inclination to ease in my nature than I can justify before Heaven; and the considerable pension which I have earned would help me to this, since I am neither luxurious nor ambitious. How much I am inclined to idleness I feel now that, like a discharged cart-horse, free from harness and bridle, I am turned out on the common. If nothing particular happens I shall not return

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to my collar till the middle of September; then I hope we shall not miss each other again. I shall certainly have to go off again to the Rhine for the manœuvres on September 9, but only for ten or eleven days. Whether the King will go as he intends for a few days to Berlin at the beginning of September seems an open question. It appears to me indispensable if there is to be any further idea of government by a King in Prussia.

"Your letter leads me to hope that you will not return to St. Petersburg before the coronation. I consider that the *'Kreuzzeitung'* made a great political blunder in its unsparing criticism of the coronation manifesto.* It would be just as great a blunder if the supporters of the paper were not to be represented at the ceremony. You may tell Moritz so. We have lost a good deal of ground by that unfortunate article, and we shall have to win it back.

"Let me conclude with my best wishes for your various cures. I hope you will return from them with renewed health. The time is approaching when all your powers will be needed for the well-being of your country. Give my (our) most respectful salutations to your wife.

"I am sending this letter by way of Zimmerhausen, registered; it *must* not fall into wrong hands!"

At Schleinitz's telegraphic request I went on July 10 to Baden-Baden, to report myself to the King. He seemed unpleasantly surprised to see me, supposing I had come on account of the ministerial crisis. I said I had heard that it had been averted, and stated I had only come in order to request his personal consent to an ex-

* After the appearance of the article the King never again read the *Kreuzzeitung*.

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tension of my leave until after the coronation, which was to take place in the autumn, accordingly beyond the three months already accorded me. The King granted this in the kindest manner, and himself invited me to dinner.

After spending August and September in Reinfeld and Stolpünde I reached Königsberg on October 13, for the coronation which was to take place on the 18th.

During the festivities I noticed that a change had taken place in the disposition of the Queen, perhaps connected with the withdrawal of Schleinitz which had occurred in the meantime. She took the initiative in discussing national German politics with me. There, for the first time, I met Count Bernstorff as minister. He did not seem yet to have come to any definite conclusion about his policy, and in conversation he gave me the impression of a man struggling after an opinion. The Queen was more friendly to me than she had been for many years; she showed me marked attentions, which apparently went beyond the line traced at that time by the King. At a moment whose ceremonial character scarcely gave any opportunity for conversation, she remained standing in front of me, while I was in the crowd, and began a conversation about German politics, which the King, who was with her, tried for some time in vain to bring to an end. The conduct of both royal personages on this and other occasions proved that at that time there was a difference of opinion between them as to the treatment of the German question; I conjecture that Count Bernstorff was not congenial to her Majesty. The King avoided talking politics with me, probably because he feared that relations with me would cause him to be regarded in a reactionary light. This anxiety

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prevailed with him as late as May 1862, and even September of that year. He thought me more fanatical than I was. Probably his remembrance of my criticism of the capacity of the new cabinet, before my departure for St. Petersburg, had some influence with him.[1]

The summons to Prince Adolf of Hohenlohe-Ingelfingen, in March 1862, to take the post of President of the Ministry as substitute for Prince Hohenzollern already suggested a sort of ministerial bill-jobbing calculated on an early date of maturing. The Prince was clever, amiable, entirely devoted to the King, and had taken part in our home politics, in a somewhat dilettante fashion, it is true, but still more ardently than most of his compeers of the old imperial nobility. Physically, however, and perhaps also intellectually, he was not equal to the post of Minister-President, and when I saw him in May 1862 he tried purposely to strengthen this impression of mine by conjuring me to deliver him from his martyrdom by immediately taking over the post which was breaking him down.

At that time I was not yet in a position to fulfil his wishes, nor had I any inclination to do so. Even at the time of my summons from St. Petersburg to Berlin I was able to assume, from the tortuous windings of our parliamentary politics, that I should have to face this question. I cannot say that I found this prospect attractive, nor that it stimulated me to action; I had no belief in the permanence of any firm resistance on his Majesty's part to domestic influences. I remember that at Eydtkuhnen

[1] See page 260.

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I did not pass the toll-gate of my native frontier with the same sensation of pleasure that I had always felt hitherto. I was oppressed by the anxiety of going to meet difficult and responsible business, and of having to renounce the pleasant and not necessarily responsible position of an influential ambassador. Nor could I calculate with any security on the weight and tendency of the assistance which I should receive from the King and his consort, from my colleagues and the country in general, in my combat with the rising tide of parliamentary government. My pride was offended by a position which obliged me to lie at anchor in a Berlin hotel, like one of the intriguing ambassadors of the Manteuffel *régime,* in the light of a suitor for office. I begged Count Bernstorff to procure me either an office or my dismissal. He had not yet abandoned the hope of being able to remain; he asked and obtained in a few hours my appointment to Paris.

I was appointed on May 22, 1862, and on June 1 I handed in my letters of credence at the Tuileries. The following letter to Roon[1] was written on the next day:—

"I have arrived safely, and am living here like a rat in an empty barn, confined by the cold, rainy weather. Yesterday I had a formal audience, drove up in imperial carriages, ceremony, procession of dignitaries. Otherwise it was short and satisfactory, no politics, as they were postponed for *un de ces jours,* and a private audience. The Empress looks very well, as she always does. Yesterday evening the King's messenger arrived; he brought me nothing from Berlin except some 'leathery

[1] *Bismarck Letters* (6th ed.), pp. 242, 243. Now also published in Roon's *Denkwürdigkeiten,* II.[4] 91, 92.

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stuff'—despatches about Denmark. I had been looking forward to a letter from you. From a communication which Bernstorff had made to Reuss, I learnt that the writer counts with certainty upon my continued stay here and his at Berlin, and that the King is mistaken if he assumes that Bernstorff is anxious to return to London as soon as possible. I cannot understand why he does not say quite openly, 'I should like to stay,' or 'I should like to go,' for neither is any disgrace. To keep both posts at the same time exposes him to far more reproach. As soon as I have anything to report, i.e. have had a private audience with the Emperor, I shall write with my own hand to the King. I still flatter myself with the hope that I shall seem less indispensable to his Majesty when I have been out of his sight for awhile, and that some hitherto unrecognised statesman will be found to supplant me, so that I may ripen a little more here. I am waiting quietly to see whether any arrangements will be made about me, and of what kind. If nothing is done in a few weeks, I shall ask for leave of absence to fetch my wife, but must in that case have some security as to the length of my stay here. I cannot settle down here on the terms of a week's notice.

"The proposal to give me a post in the ministry without a portfolio will not, I hope, find favour in the highest quarters; it was not mentioned in my last audience. The post is unpractical; to say nothing, and to put up with everything; to meddle uninvited in everything and be cut short by everybody where one really wants to get in a word. I value a portfolio above the Presidency, for the latter after all is only a reserve post; nor should I care to have a colleague who spent half

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his time in London. If he does not want to live there altogether, I am heartily willing that he should stay where he is, and should regard it as unfriendly to urge him away.

"My kindest regards to your family. Your faithful friend and willing but not daring comrade in war, if war it must be; but rather in winter than in hot weather!"

Roon wrote to me from Berlin under date June 4:[1]

". . . On Sunday Schleinitz spoke to me about a successor for Hohenlohe, and thought your time had not yet come. When I asked him who, in his opinion, ought to act as head of the ministry, he shrugged his shoulders; and when I added that then there would be nothing for it but for him to take pity on the post himself, he evaded my remark, neither refusing nor agreeing. You will not be surprised that this makes me feel anxious. I therefore found an opportunity yesterday of raising the question of the Presidency in the proper quarter, and found the old inclination towards you along with the old indecision. Who can help us there? and how is this to end? . . . . No party fit to govern! The Democrats are excluded as a matter of course, but the great majority consists of Democrats and those who intend to become such, even though the rough drafts of their addresses are saturated with assurances of loyalty. Next to them come the Constitutionalists, i.e. the real ones, a little troop of not much more than twenty persons with Vincke at their head; about fifteen Conservatives; thirty Catholics; some twenty Poles. Where then can any possible

[1] The letter has been published in full in the *Bismarck-Jahrbuch*, III. 233, 234. Now also in Roon's *Denkwürdigkeiten*, II.[4] 93 &c.

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government find the necessary support? Which party can govern with this grouping, except the Democrats? and these cannot and must not. Under these circumstances, according to my logic, the present government must stay in office, however difficult it may be. And just for that reason it must absolutely be reinforced, and the sooner the better. . . . It certainly does not appear to me to be for the interest of Prussia that Count Bernstorff should still hold two important posts. I shall therefore be very glad if you are soon appointed President of the Ministry, although I am quite convinced Bernstorff will quickly abandon his dual position and no longer play the part of Colossus with one foot in London and one in Berlin. I appeal to your conscience not to make any counter-move, since it might and would result in driving the government into the open arms of the Democrats . . . . Hohenlohe's leave of absence is up on the 11th inst. He will not return, but only send his resignation. And then, yes, then I hope the telegraph will summon you hither. This is what all patriots long for. How could you then hesitate and manœuvre?"

My answer was as follows:

"Paris: Whitsuntide 1862.[1]

"Dear Roon,—I received your letter duly through Stein [at that time Military Plenipotentiary] obviously unopened, for I could not open it without partially destroying it. You may rest assured that I shall not make any counter-moves and manœuvres; if I could not see from all the indications that Bernstorff has no thought of

[1] June 8 or 9. *Bismarck Letters* (6th ed.), pp. 243, 244. Now also in Roon's *Denkwürdigkeiten*, II.[4] 95 &c.

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resignation I should expect with certainty to leave Paris in a few days, in order to go *via* London to Berlin, and I should not stir a finger to prevent it. As it is I am stirring none, but I cannot after all advise the King to give me Bernstorff's place, and if I were to enter without a portfolio, we should have, including Schleinitz, three Ministers for Foreign Affairs, two of whom, in face of any responsibility, might withdraw at an hour's notice, one into the Household Ministry, the other to London. With you I believe I am in accord; with Jagow I believe I can become so. The Departmental Ministries would not cause me any difficulty; but I have tolerably distinct opinions about foreign affairs, so probably has Bernstorff, but I am not acquainted with them, and I am not able to accommodate myself to his methods and his forms. Nor have I any confidence in his just estimate of political affairs, and presumably he has none in mine. However, the uncertainty cannot go on much longer; I shall wait until the 11th to see whether the King will abide by his views of the 26th ult.,[1] or supply himself elsewhere. If nothing is done by then I shall write to his Majesty on the assumption that my position here is permanent and that I can make my domestic arrangements with a view to staying here till the winter at anyrate, or longer. My luggage and carriages are still at St. Petersburg; I must find a place for them somewhere. Besides, mine are the habits of a respectable *paterfamilias*, including the need for a settled habitation, and I have really had none since July of last year when Schleinitz first told me that I was to be moved. You do me wrong if you think I am un-

[1] The date of the special audience at the Castle of Babelsberg before his departure for Paris.

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willing. On the contrary, I have lively attacks of the adventurous spirit of that animal which goes and dances on the ice when it is feeling too happy.

"I have followed the debates on the Address to some extent, and am under the impression that the government surrendered more than was desirable in committee, perhaps also in the whole House. After all, what does a bad Address matter? The people fancy that by the adoption of another they have won a victory. In an Address a chamber does its manœuvring with dummy enemies and blank cartridges. If people mistake the sham fight for a serious victory, and scatter themselves to plunder and maraud on royal territory, the time will doubtless come when the dummy enemy will unmask his batteries and begin serious fighting. I notice a lack of geniality about our point of view; your letter breathes forth honest martial anger sharpened by the dust and heat of the battle. Without flattery, you gave an admirable answer, but really it is wasted; these people do not understand German. I have found our friendly neighbour calm and accommodating, very well disposed towards us, very much inclined to discuss the difficulties of the 'German question.' He can refuse his sympathies to none of the existing dynasties, but he hopes that Prussia will solve successfully the great problem set her, namely, the German one; then the government would also win confidence at home. Nothing but fine words. I tell people who ask why I have not settled down here comfortably, that I am thinking of taking a few months' leave before long, and then returning here with my wife.

"*June* 10.—His Majesty's answer to the Address makes a very dignified impression in its reserve and

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moderation; it is calm without any irritation. Several papers contain allusions to Schleinitz's entrance in place of Hohenlohe, I do not grudge it him, and he will still remain Treasurer of the Household.

"I shall send this letter to-morrow by the King's messenger; he will then wait at Aachen until he has something more to bring from Berlin. Remember me very kindly to the ladies of your family. Mine are all well.

"In old friendship, your

"v. B."

On June 26 the Emperor had invited me to Fontainebleau, and took a long walk with me. In the course of conversation about the political questions of the day and the last few years, he asked me suddenly whether I thought the King would be inclined to enter into an alliance with him. I answered that the King had the most friendly feelings towards him, and that the prejudices which formerly prevailed in the public mind against France had almost disappeared; but alliances were the result of circumstances, which determined their need or their utility. An alliance assumed a motive—a definite object. The Emperor disputed the necessity of any such assumption; there were, he said, Powers that stood in friendly relations to one another, and others with whom this was less the case. In view of the uncertain future confidence must be directed towards some one side. He did not speak of an alliance with a view to any adventurous project, but he thought that between Prussia and France there was a conformity of interests in which lay an element of an *entente intime et durable.* It would be a great mistake to try to create events; it would be

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impossible to calculate their tendency and strength in advance; but it was possible to make arrangements to meet them—to be forearmed while considering means to confront them and profit by them. This idea of a "diplomatic alliance," in which the custom of mutual confidence was assumed and the two parties learnt to count on one another in difficult situations, was further developed by the Emperor. Then suddenly he stood still and said, "You cannot imagine what singular overtures Austria made to me a few days ago. It appears that the coincidence of your appointment with the arrival of Herr von Budberg has caused a regular panic in Vienna. Prince Metternich told me he had received instructions which went so far that he himself was alarmed by them; he had authorisation as unlimited as a sovereign had ever entrusted to his representative in respect to all and every question which I might raise, so that he might come to an agreement with me at any cost." This revelation placed me in some perplexity, for apart from the incompatibility of the interests of the two states, I have an almost superstitious dislike to being entangled with the fortunes of Austria. [1]

These deliverances of the Emperor's could not have been entirely without foundation, even though he might expect that I should not take advantage of my social relations with Metternich to the extent of breaking the confidence reposed in me. In any case this revelation

[1] Compare this with report of June 20, 1862, to Bernstorff, which agrees with the above almost word for word, although Prince Bismarck cannot have had it at hand when his reminiscences were being taken down. I have published it in the *Bismarck-Jahrbuch*, IV. 152 &c.

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to the Prussian ambassador was imprudent, whether it was true or exaggerated. Even at Frankfort I had become convinced that Viennese policy under certain circumstances would shrink from no combination; and would sacrifice Venetia or the left bank of the Rhine, if by these means they could purchase a confederacy on the right bank securing the preponderance of Austria over Prussia. I knew that German phrases would pass current at the Hofburg so long as they could serve as a leash for us or the Würzburgers. If a Franco-Austrian coalition was not already in existence against us we owed this not to Austria but to France, yet not to any special affection for us on Napoleon's part, but to his doubts whether Austria would be in a position to sail with the nationality breeze then blowing strong. In the report which I made to the King, my deduction from all this was not that we ought to enter into an agreement with France, but that we could not count upon Austria's loyalty to the Confederation as against France, nor could we hope to win Austria's free consent to the improvement of our position in Germany.

In the lack of any kind of political task or business I went for a short time to England, and on July 25 started for a longish tour in the south of France. To this period belongs the following correspondence:

"Paris: July 15, 1862.[1]

"Dear Roon,—I have been wondering a good deal lately why you inquired by telegraph whether I had got your letter of the 26th (ult.). I did not answer it be-

[1] *Bismarck Letters* (6th edit.), p. 250 &c.; Roon, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, II.[4] 102 &c.

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cause I could give no news about the subject of chief importance, but could only receive it. Since then a courier has reached me who was announced to me by telegraph a fortnight ago, and in expectation of whom I returned a week too soon from England. He brought me a letter from Bernstorff in answer to my request for leave. I am quite superfluous here now, because there is neither Emperor, minister, nor ambassador here. I am not in very good health, and this provisional existence, with the suspense of 'whether and how' without any regular business, is not calming to the nerves. I thought that I was coming here for ten days or a fortnight, and now I have been here seven weeks without ever knowing whether I shall have to stay another twenty-four hours. I do not want to force myself on the King by lying at anchor in Berlin, and I will not go home because I am afraid of being stuck fast for an unlimited time in the hotel, on my way through Berlin. From Bernstorff's letter [1] I learn that it is not at present the King's pleasure to make over foreign affairs to me, and that his Majesty has not yet decided whether I am to take Hohenlohe's place; but does not want to prejudice this question negatively by giving me six weeks' leave. The King is doubtful, according to Bernstorff, whether I can be of any use in the present session, and whether my appointment, if it takes place at all, ought not to be postponed till the winter. Under these circumstances, I am repeating my request for six weeks' leave, [2] which I put on the following grounds. In the first place, I really

[1] Of July 12. *Bismarck-Jahrbuch*, VI. 155, 156.

[2] Letter to Bernstorff of July 15. *Bismarck-Jahrbuch*, VI. 156 &c.

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need to recruit my health in mountain and sea air; if I am to take an oar in the galley I must collect some store of health, and Paris has hitherto suited me badly, with this confounded lounging bachelor's life. In the second place, the King must have time to come to a quiet decision on his own initiative, else his Majesty will make those persons who urged him on responsible for the conclusions. In the third place, Bernstorff does not intend to go now: the King has repeatedly invited him to stay, and declared that he never spoke to me at all about the Foreign Office; but I do not consider the position of a minister without portfolio tenable. In the fourth place, my joining it would appear at the present time purposeless and casual, but may be used later on as an impressive manœuvre.

"I imagine that the ministry will quietly and distinctly oppose all attempts at retrenchment in the army budget, but not let them lead to a crisis, rather permitting the Chamber to discuss the whole budget in detail. I suppose that will be finished by September. Then the budget, which I assume will not be acceptable to the government, will be sent up to the Upper House, in case it is quite certain that the mutilated budget-draft will be rejected there. Then, or at anyrate before the discussion in the Upper House, it might be returned to the Chamber of Deputies, with a royal message explaining the reasons why the Crown cannot give its assent to a budget-bill of this nature, and they might be called upon to discuss the matter afresh. Perhaps at this point, or earlier, it might be well to adjourn the Diet for thirty days. The longer the matter is drawn out, the more the Chamber will lose in public esteem, since it has made and will

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continue to make the mistake of taking its stand on foolish trifles, and has not a single orator who does not increase the boredom of the public. If they can be brought to take their stand on such rubbish as the continuity of the Upper House, and begin a conflict on this subject, delaying the business proper, it will be a great piece of good fortune. They will grow tired, hope that the government's wind will give out, while the district judges will be getting alarmed at the expense of finding substitutes. When they grow mellow, feel that they are boring the country, and are urgently hoping for concessions on the part of the government, to deliver them from their false position, then, in my opinion, comes the moment to prove to them by my nomination that we are very far from giving up the contest, but are rather returning to it with fresh forces. The appearance of a new battalion in the ministerial ranks would then make an impression which could not be obtained now. Especially if there was a good deal of clatter made beforehand with talk about granting charters, and *coups d'état*, my old reputation for light-hearted violence will come in useful, and they will think 'Now for it!' Then all the Centre and the 'halfs' will be ready for negotiation.

"All this depends more on my instinctive feeling than on any proof that I could bring forward; and I should not go so far as on my own responsibility to say 'No' to any order of the King's. But if I am asked for my opinion, I shall give it in favour of keeping in the background a few months longer.

"Perhaps all this is reckoning without my host; perhaps his Majesty will never make up his mind to appoint me, for I really do not see why he should do it at all,

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after not doing it during the last six weeks. But there is absolutely no reason why I should be either here, swallowing the hot dust of Paris, yawning in *cafés* or theatres, or camping at Berlin in the Hôtel Royal as a political dilettante. I could spend my time better at the baths.

"I am really amazed at the political incapacity of our Chambers, and yet we are a highly cultured country; doubtless too highly; other countries are certainly not wiser than the flower of our class-elected representatives, but they do not possess the childlike self-confidence with which our people will make a public exhibition of their impotency in complete nakedness as a standard of how to do it. How have we Germans come by our reputation for retiring modesty? There is not one of us who does not think that he knows better about everything, from managing a war to picking fleas from a dog, than all the learned specialists; while in other countries there are many people who admit that they know less about some things than other people, and are therefore ready to give in and keep silence.

"*The 16th.*—I must close quickly to-day, for my time is required for other business. With kindest regards for your family, I remain in old friendship,

"Your

"v. B."

Roon answered me under date August 31, 1862:

"My dear Bismarck,—You will be pretty well able to imagine why I did not answer you before; I was always hoping and hoping for a decision, or else for a situation which would bring about an acute solution. Unfor-

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tunately my, or rather our, troubles still preserve their chronic character. Now a new complication has arisen —the acquittal of von der Heydt's slanderers—but this too will be dissipated in the sand of the Mark. I have withdrawn for a few days from the *misère générale,* taking flight to this place (Zimmerhausen) to shoot partridges, when the King set out for D[oberan]. Bernstorff, whom I found quite determined three or four weeks ago to give up his post, which is becoming much too difficult and troublesome for him, told me a week ago that after all he was not sure whether at the conclusion of the parliamentary session he should not yield to the King's wish (supposing it to be expressed) and remain, although his longing for deliverance was by no means extinguished. Translated into facts, this means that the session had been drawn out so long that its conclusion will probably coincide with the confinement of the Countess, and that therefore a removal involving a winter journey would be even more inconvenient than under other circumstances. He had told me even before this that his removal to London must take place at the latest in September, if it was to be acceptable to him. This perhaps condemnable self-seeking on the one hand, and the indecision of the King on the other, combined with the declaration of von der Heydt that he could and would put up with a President, but not with one taken from among his younger colleagues, makes me return to my former assertion that you will have to enter the ministry as President, and for the present without a portfolio; this will come of its own accord later. I consider it quite unreasonable and impossible that we should enter upon the winter session in our former incomplete and unsatisfactory

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condition, and more than one person in the highest quarters agrees with this view. There must and will be fighting. Concessions and compromises are not to be thought of; least of all is the King disposed towards them. We may therefore look with certainty for dangerous catastrophes quite independently of the complications in our foreign policy, which already exhibits some very interesting entanglements.

"I can imagine that you, my old friend, are greatly disgusted; I can measure your vexation by my own. But I still hope that you will not sulk on that account, but rather remember the ancient knightly duty of hewing out a way for the King, even when, as at present, he has gone into danger wantonly. But you are only a human being, and, what is more, a husband and a father. You want besides all your work to have a home and a family life. You have a right to it, *c'est convenu!* You want therefore to know, and to know soon, where your bed and writing-table are to be set up, whether in Paris or Berlin. And the King's word that you are not to establish yourself at Berlin has as yet, as far as I know, not been recalled; but you must have certainty. I will do my part—and this not from selfishness but from patriotic interest—to procure you this certainty before long. I am therefore pretending, and shall continue to do so until you forbid it, that I have been privately instructed by you to procure this certainty. After my last conversations with the Most Serene about you, I was in any case obliged to use my special personal interest on your behalf. I can therefore speak also of your unendurable position, which is specially due to your being distinctly prevented from establishing yourself in Paris. Motives

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of this kind are comprehensible, and might therefore have the effect of political considerations. I am therefore pretending that I have your consent in advising your appointment, *for the present,* to the presidency without a portfolio, which I have hitherto avoided doing; it cannot be managed in any other way! If you absolutely decline this, then you can throw me over, or order me to keep silence. I shall speak to his Majesty on the 7th, at a very confidential audience which he has promised me on that day, when he passes through on his way to the christening at Carlsruhe (on September 9). So you will still have time for protesting.

"Of the general situation I do not mean to speak to-day. The internal catastrophe, in my opinion, will not take place now, but early in the spring, and then you must necessarily be present. It will be absolutely decisive for our future. . . .

"Your

"v. ROON." [1]

I replied:

"Toulouse: September 12, 1862.

"I have been travelling hither and thither in the Pyrenees, and in consequence have only to-day received your letter of the 31st [August]. I had also hoped to find one from Bernstorff, who wrote to me four weeks ago that the question of the ministerial changes must certainly be decided in September. Your letter, unfortunately, leads me to suppose that the uncertainty will be just as great at Christmas as it is now. My belongings are still at St. Petersburg, and will be snowed up

[1] *Bismarck-Jahrbuch*, III. 237, 238. Now also Roon's *Denkwürdigkeiten*, II.[4] 109 &c.

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there. My carriages are at Stettin, my horses in the country near Berlin, my family in Pomerania, and I myself on the highroad. I am going back now to Paris, although I have less than ever to do there, but my leave is at an end. My plan is now to propose to Bernstorff that I shall go to Berlin to discuss future arrangements verbally with him.[1] I feel the necessity of spending a few days at Reinfeld, for I have not seen my family since May 8. On that occasion I must get matters cleared up. I should like nothing better than to remain in Paris, but I must know that the move and settling in are not only for a few weeks or months; for that my household is too large. I have never refused to accept the presidency without a portfolio, as soon as the King commands it. I only said that I considered the arrangement unsatisfactory. I am still prepared to enter without a portfolio, but I cannot see any serious intention of it. If his Majesty would say to me, November 1, or January 1, or April 1—then I should know what I was about, and I am not a man to make difficulties; I only ask for a hundredth part of the consideration of which Bernstorff received such rich measure. This uncertainty takes away all my pleasure in business, and I thank you from my heart for every friendly service that you undertake in order to put an end to it. If this does not soon succeed, I must take matters as they stand, and say to myself: I am the King's ambassador in Paris, and I will send for chick and child to join me there on October 1. When that is done his Majesty can dismiss me from my office, but he can no longer compel me to move again

[1] This was done in a letter sent from Montpellier on the same day. *Bismarck-Jahrbuch*, VI. 162 &c.

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immediately; I would rather go home to the country, for then I should know where I am living. In my solitude I have, with God's help, recovered my former health, and I am better than I have been for the last ten years; but I have not heard a single word about our political world. I have learnt to-day, from one of my wife's letters, that the King was at Doberan, else I should not have understood the D. in your letter. Nor yet had I heard that he was going to Carlsruhe on the 13th. I should no longer find his Majesty if I wanted to go there. I know, too, from experience, that apparitions of this sort are unwelcome; they lead his Majesty to assume ambitious and pushing intentions on my part, which, God knows, are very far from me. I am so well satisfied to be his Majesty's ambassador in Paris that I would ask for nothing but the certainty of remaining in this position till 1875. Procure me this or any other certainty, and I will paint angels' wings on your photograph! . . .

"What do you mean by 'end of this session'? Can that be so definitely fixed beforehand? Will it not rather be merged in the winter session without any interval? And can the Chambers be closed without any conclusion about the budget? I do not want to answer with a distinct negative, it depends upon the plan of campaign. I am just setting out for Montpellier, thence by way of Lyons to Paris. Please direct to me there, and give my kindest regards to your family.

"In faithful friendship,

"Your

"v. B." [1]

[1] *Bismarck Letters* (6th edit.), pp. 263, 264. Also Roon's *Denkwürdigkeiten*, II.[4] 117 &c.

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In Paris I received the following telegram, the signature of which had been agreed upon:

"Berlin: le 18 Septembre.

"*Periculum in mora. Dépêchez-vous.*

"L'oncle de Maurice,

"HENNING."

Henning was the second name of Moritz Blanckenburg, Roon's nephew. Although the wording left it doubtful whether the invitation was given on Roon's own initiative, or was suggested by the King, I did not hesitate to set out.

I arrived at Berlin in the morning of September 20, and was summoned to the Crown Prince. To his question as to my view of the situation, I could only give a very cautious answer, because I had read no German papers during the last few weeks, and from a sort of *dépit* had neglected to inform myself about home affairs. The cause of my vexation was the King's having led me to believe that in six weeks at latest he would come to a decision about my future—i.e. whether I was to take up my residence in Berlin, Paris, or London—that a quarter of a year had already passed away, and that autumn was come before I knew where I was to spend the winter. I was not sufficiently acquainted with the particulars of the situation to be able to give the Crown Prince a detailed opinion; nor did I consider myself justified in expressing my views to him before I had done so to the King. The impression which the fact of my audience had made was at once discernible from Roon's statement that the King had said to him, referring to

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me: "He is no good either; you see he has already been to see my son." The bearing of this remark was not at once comprehensible to me, because I did not know that the King, having conceived the idea of abdication, assumed that I either knew or suspected it, and had therefore been trying to place myself favourably with his successor.

As a matter of fact, however, the idea of the King's abdication was fresh to me when I was received at Babelsberg on September 22, and the situation only became clear to me when his Majesty defined it in some such words as these: "I will not reign if I cannot do it in such a fashion as I can be answerable for to God, my conscience, and my subjects. But I cannot do that if I am to rule according to the will of the present majority in parliament, and I can no longer find any ministers prepared to conduct my government without subjecting themselves and me to the parliamentary majority. I have therefore resolved to lay down my crown, and have already sketched out the proclamation of my abdication, based on the motives to which I have referred." The King showed me the document in his own handwriting lying on the table, whether already signed or not I do not know. His Majesty concluded by repeating that he could not govern without suitable ministers.

I replied that his Majesty had been acquainted ever since May with my readiness to enter the ministry; I was certain that Roon would remain with me on his side, and I did not doubt that we should succeed in completing the cabinet, supposing other members should feel themselves compelled to resign on account of my admission. After a good deal of consideration and discussion, the King

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asked me whether I was prepared as minister to advocate the reorganisation of the army, and when I assented he asked me further whether I would do so in opposition to the majority in parliament and its resolutions. When I asserted my willingness, he finally declared, "Then it is my duty, with your help, to attempt to continue the battle, and I shall not abdicate." I do not know whether he destroyed the document which was lying on the table, or whether he preserved it *in rei memoriam.*

The King invited me to accompany him into the park. During the walk he gave me a programme to read, which filled eight pages of his close writing, embraced all eventualities of the politics of the time, and went into such details as the reform of the district sub-Diets. I cannot say whether this elaboration had already served as the basis of discussion with my predecessors, or whether it was to serve as a security against a policy of conservative thoroughness such as I was credited with. At the time when he was meditating my appointment some fear of this nature had doubtless been aroused in him by his wife, of whose political understanding he had originally a very high opinion, dating from the time when his Majesty was only permitted a Crown Prince's privilege of criticising his brother; without the obligation to do better himself. In criticism the Princess was her husband's superior. The first doubts as to her intellectual superiority were wakened in him when he was compelled, instead of criticising, to act himself, and to bear the official responsibility for improvements. As soon as the tasks of the two royal persons became practical, the King's sound common-sense had begun gradually to emancipate itself more and more from her ready feminine volubility.

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I succeeded in convincing him that, so far as he was concerned, it was not a question of Liberal or Conservative of this or that shade, but rather of monarchical rule or parliamentary government, and that the latter must be avoided at all costs, if even by a period of dictatorship. I said: "In this situation I shall, even if your Majesty command me to do things which I do not consider right, tell you my opinion quite openly; but if you finally persist in yours, I will rather perish with the King than forsake your Majesty in the contest with parliamentary government." This view was at that time strong and absolute in me, because I regarded the negations and phrases of the Opposition of that day as politically disastrous in face of the national task of Prussia, and because I cherished such strong feelings of devotion and affection for William I., that the thought of perishing with him appeared to me, under the circumstances, a natural and congenial conclusion to my life.

The King tore the programme to pieces, and was about to throw them down from the bridge into the dry ditch in the park, when I reminded him that these papers in his well-known writing might fall into very wrong hands. He saw that I was right, put the pieces in his pocket to commit them to the flames, and on the same day ratified my appointment as minister and interim chairman of the ministry, which was made public on the 23nd. The King kept my nomination as President in reserve, until he had completed the correspondence on the subject with Prince Hohenzollern, who still occupied this post constitutionally.[1]

[1] Cf. "*Kaiser Wilhelm I. und Fürst Bismarck*," in the *Münchener Allg. Zeitung*, October 7, 1890.

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CHAPTER XII.

RETROSPECT OF PRUSSIAN POLICY.

THE royal authority with us had been weakened by a want of independence and energy in our foreign and still more in our domestic policy; and the same cause had fostered the unjust middle-class opinions about the army and its officers, and the aversion to military proposals and expenditure. In the parliamentary groups the ambition of the leaders, orators, and ministerial candidates found nourishment, and took shelter behind the national ill-temper. Since the death of Frederick the Great our policy had either lacked definite aims, or else chosen or pursued them unskilfully; the latter was the case from 1786 to 1806, when our policy began in confusion and ended in disaster. Before the definite outbreak of the French Revolution there is not a trace of a national German tendency to be found in it. The first indications of anything of the kind to be found in the confederation of princes, in the ideas of a Prussian empire, in the line of demarcation, in the acquisition of German territory, are the results, not of German, but of Prussian particularist efforts. In 1786 the chief interest was not as yet centred in national German territory, but rather in the idea of territorial acquisition in Poland; and before the war of 1792 the distrust between Prussia and Austria was fed less by the German than the Polish rivalry of

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the two Powers. In the disputes of the Thugut-Lehrbach period, the struggle for the possession of Polish territory, Cracow in particular, played a more striking part than that for the hegemony of Germany, which was prominent in the second half of the present century.

At that time the question of nationality was kept more in the background; the Prussian state incorporated fresh Polish subjects quite as readily as German, if not more so, so long as they were subjects. Austria, too, had no hesitation in risking the results of the common war against France, as soon as she began to fear that the necessary forces for opposing Prussia in order to secure her own Polish interests would not be forthcoming if they had to be employed on the frontiers of France. It is hard to say whether the situation at that time, judged by the opinions and capacities of the persons who directed it in Russia and Austria, offered any opportunity to Prussian policy to enter upon a path more profitable than that of a veto on the Oriental policy of its two Eastern neighbours, such as it exercised at the convention of Reichenbach of July 27, 1790. I cannot resist the impression that this veto was an act of unprofitable self-assertion, recalling the French *prestige*, which used up to no purpose all the authority inherited from Frederick the Great, without giving Prussia any advantage from this exhibition of power except the satisfaction of her vanity in asserting her position as a Great Power in face of the two imperial Powers' "show of power."

If Austria and Russia found occupation in the East, it would, I imagine, have been to the interest of their neighbour—whose power at that time was inferior to

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theirs—not to disturb them in it, but rather to help and confirm them in their eastward aspirations, and thus weaken their pressure on our own borders. At that time Prussia, in consequence of her military arrangements, was more quickly ready to strike than her neighbours, and might, as on many subsequent occasions, have profited by this readiness, could she have refrained from premature partisanship, and, in accordance with her comparative weakness, placed herself *en vedette* instead of trying to get the *prestige* of an arbiter between Austria, Russia, and the Porte.

The mistake in such situations has usually lain in the aimlessness and irresolution of the mode in which they were used and turned to advantage. The Great Elector and Frederick the Great had a clear conception of the mischief of half-measures in cases where there is a question of taking a side or threatening to do so. So long as Prussia had not attained the form of a state approximately corresponding to the German nationality; so long as—to use the expression which Prince Metternich employed to me—it was not one of the "saturated" states, it was obliged to manage its policy *en vedette,* according to the saying of Frederick the Great quoted above. But a *vedette* has no right to exist without a fully equipped force behind it. Without this, and without the determination to make an active use of it, whether for or against one of the combatants, Prussian policy could derive no material advantage, either in Poland or Germany, from the interposition of its European influence on such occasions as that of Reichenbach; it could but awaken the annoyance and mistrust of both neighbours. To this day we can discern in the historical judgments

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of our chauvinistic countrymen the satisfaction with which the *rôle* of arbitrator as it might have been exercised from Berlin on the Eastern quarrel inspired Prussian self-satisfaction; in their eyes the convention of Reichenbach is a point of maximum on the scale of "Frederickian" policy, after which followed the descent and downward course through the negotiations of Pillnitz, the peace of Basle, down to Tilsit.

Had I been a minister of Frederick William II. my advice would rather have been to support the ambition of Austria and Russia in an eastward direction; but in return to demand material concessions, if only in regard to the Polish question, at that time popular, and rightly so, as long as we did not possess Dantzig and Thorn, and the German question had not yet been raised. At the head of 100,000 or more capable soldiers, with the threat of putting them into action if necessary, and leaving Austria to carry on the war against France alone, Prussian policy in the situation then prevailing could still have attained better results than the diplomatic triumph of Reichenbach.

The history of the house of Austria from Charles V. onward is held to point to a whole series of neglected opportunities, for which in most cases the royal confessor for the time being was made responsible; but the history of Prussia, even if we consider only the events of the last hundred years, is no less rich in similar omissions. If the opportunity offered at the time of the Reichenbach convention, rightly used, could bring about some advance, although not a satisfactory one, in the career of Prussia, an evolution on a larger scale would have been possible as early as 1805, when Prussian policy could have been

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played against France on behalf of Austria and Russia, in the military field better than in diplomacy, but not gratis. The conditions on which the assistance was to be, or to have been, afforded, could not be insisted on by a minister like Haugwitz, but only by a general at the head of 150,000 men in Bohemia or Bavaria. What was *post festum* in 1806 would have had decisive results in 1805. As in Austria the confessors, so in Prussia the privy councillors and honest but *borné* adjutants-general were responsible for the neglected opportunities.

There was all the less need to give gratuitously the services which Prussian policy rendered to Russian at the peace of Adrianople in 1829 and at the suppression of the Polish rising in 1831, that the unfriendly intrigues which had occurred a little while before between the Emperor Nicholas and King Charles X. were not unknown to the Berlin cabinet. The family relations between the princes were, as a rule, sufficiently genial among us to cover Russian sins, but there was a lack of reciprocity. In the year 1813 Russia had doubtless won a claim on Prussian gratitude. In February 1813, and down to the congress of Vienna, Alexander I. had remained, on the whole, faithful to his promise to restore Prussia to the *status quo ante,* doubtless without neglecting Russian interests. Still it was natural that Frederick William III. should entertain a grateful remembrance of him. Such remembrance was still very lively among us during my childhood, until the death of Alexander in 1825. Russian Grand Dukes, generals, and detachments of soldiers, who appeared from time to time at Berlin, still enjoyed a legacy of the popularity with which the first Cossacks were welcomed among us in 1813.

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Flagrant ingratitude, such as Prince Schwarzenberg proclaimed, is not only unlovely but unwise in politics as in private life. But we paid our debt, not only when the Russians were in difficulties at Adrianople in 1829, and by our attitude in Poland in 1831, but also during the whole reign of Nicholas I., who appealed less to German romanticism and good nature than Alexander I., though he was on friendly terms with his Prussian relations and with Prussian officers. During his reign we lived like Russian vassals, even in 1831, when Russia could scarcely have made way against the Poles without our help, but especially in all European combinations between 1831 and 1850, when we always accepted and honoured Russian cheques; until after 1848, when the young Austrian Emperor found more favour in the sight of the Russian than the King of Prussia, and the Russian arbitrator gave his decisions in cold and hard terms against Prussia and the German aspirations, taking full payment for the friendly services of 1831 by forcing on us the humiliation of Olmütz. Afterwards we became considerable creditors of Russia in the Crimean war and in the Polish insurrection of 1863, and though in that year we did not accept Alexander II.'s personal summons to war, and he showed his annoyance at this, and on the Danish question, this only proves how far Russian claims had advanced beyond equality and how they were beginning to demand actual subordination.

The deficit on our side was caused in the first place by a feeling of kinship and the habit of dependence in which the lesser energy stood to the greater; secondly, by the mistaken supposition that Nicholas entertained the same feelings for us as Alexander I., and had the

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same claims on our gratitude as had originated at the time of the war of liberation. As a matter of fact, during the reign of the Emperor Nicholas, no cause rooted in the German nature presented itself to place our friendship with Russia on a footing of equality and enable us at anyrate to get an advantage from it corresponding to that which Russia had derived from our assistance. A little more self-respect and confidence in our own power would have led to the recognition at St. Petersburg of our claims to reciprocity, the rather that in 1830, after the July revolution, Prussia, in spite of its cumbrous *Landwehr* system, was, in face of that astonishing event, for at least a year unquestionably the strongest military state in Europe, perhaps the only one that was ready to strike a blow. How greatly military preparations had been neglected during fifteen years of peace, not only in Austria but in Russia (with the sole exception perhaps of the Imperial Guard and the Grand Duke Constantine's Polish army), was proved by the weakness and dilatoriness of the preparations made by the mighty Russian Empire against the little kingdom of Warsaw.

Similar conditions prevailed at that time in the French, and still more in the Austrian army. After the July revolution Austria took more than a year to repair the damage done to the organisation of her army sufficiently to enable her to protect her Italian interests. Austrian policy under Metternich was skilful enough to postpone any decision of the three great Eastern Powers until she herself should feel prepared to put in her word. It was only in Prussia that the military machine, cum-

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brous as it was, operated with precision; and had Prussian policy been able to form its own decisions, it would have had strength enough to prejudice according to its own discretion the situation of 1830 in Germany and the Netherlands. But an independent Prussian policy did not even exist in the period between 1806 and the 'forties; our policy was made alternately in Vienna and St. Petersburg. As far as it went its independent way at Berlin between 1786 and 1806, and 1842 and 1862, criticism from the point of view of an energetic Prussian can scarcely approve it.

Before 1866 we could only claim the title of a Great Power *cum grano salis*, and after the Crimean war we considered it necessary to sue for an outward recognition of this position, by dancing attendance at the congress of Paris. We confessed that we required the testimony of other Powers in order to look upon ourselves as a Great Power. We did not feel up to the standard of Gortchakoff's speech about Italy, *une grande puissance ne se reconnaît pas, elle se révèle.* The *révélation* that Prussia was a Great Power had been previously recognised on occasion in Europe (compare Chapter v.), but it was weakened by long years of cowardly policy, which at last found expression in the pitiful part played by Manteuffel at Paris. Her belated admittance could not obscure the fact that a Great Power requires for its recognition, above all else, the conviction and the courage to be one. I regarded it as a deplorable lack of self-knowledge that, after all the slights that had been put upon us by Austria and all the Western Powers in general, we still felt the necessity of gaining admittance to the congress

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and adding our signatures to its conclusions. Our position at the Black Sea conference in London in 1870 would have proved the correctness of this view, had Prussia not pushed her way in an undignified fashion into the Paris congress. When Manteuffel returned from Paris and was my guest at Frankfort on April 20 and 21, I took the opportunity of expressing to him my regret that he had not taken *victa Catoni* for his motto, and so paved the way for our proper independent position in the eventuality of the Russo-French *rapprochement,* which the position of affairs rendered probable. There could be no doubt in the Berlin Foreign Office that the Emperor Napoleon even at that time had his eye on Russian friendship, and that authoritative circles in London regarded the conclusion of peace as premature.† How dignified and independent would have been our position if we had not forced our way in a humiliating fashion into the Paris congress, but had rather declined participation, when our invitation did not arrive at the proper time! Had we shown a suitable reserve we should have been courted when the new grouping took place; and even outwardly our position would have been more dignified, if we had not made our inclusion among the great European Powers dependent upon our diplomatic opponents, but had based it simply upon our own self-knowledge; refraining from any claim to participate in European negotiations, which were of no interest for Prussia, instead of seeking, on the analogy of the Reichenbach convention, after the vanity of *prestige,* and the discussion of things which did not concern us.

† "We have been infernally humbugged," Lord Clarendon is said to have remarked.

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The neglected opportunities which belong to the two periods 1786 to 1806 and 1842 to 1862 were seldom understood by contemporaries, and still rarer was it for the responsibility for them to be rightly assigned. Fifty to a hundred years later the opening of archives and memoirs of those persons who had shared in the action or the knowledge put public opinion in a position to recognise the πρῶτον ψεῦδος for the several blunders, the point of divergence into the wrong path. Frederick the Great left behind him a rich inheritance of authority and a belief in Prussian policy and power. His heirs, like the new generation of to-day, were able to live for a couple of decades on the legacies of the old, without realising the weakness and errors of their latter-day *régime*. Even down to the battle of Jena they continued to overvalue their own military and political ability. It was only the collapse of the following weeks that forced the Court and the people to realise the clumsiness and error which had prevailed in the management of the state. Whose clumsiness and whose error? who was personally responsible for this unexpected and tremendous collapse?—these are matters which are undecided to this day.

Under an absolute monarchy—and at that time Prussia was one—no one except the sovereign can be proved to have any definite share of responsibility for its policy. If the King comes to any unfortunate decisions, no one can judge whether they are due to his own moral will, or to the influence which the most various personalities of male and female gender—aides-de-camp, courtiers and political intriguers, flatterers, chatterboxes and tell-tales—may have had upon the monarch. In the

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last resort the royal signature covers everything; how it has been obtained no one ever knows. From the monarchical point of view, the most natural expedient is to place the responsibility for every event on the minister for the time being. But even when the form of absolutism has made way for the form of a constitution, the so-called ministerial responsibility in no way depends on the will of the irresponsible monarch. True, a minister can resign if he cannot obtain the royal signature where he considers it necessary; but by his resignation he takes upon himself the responsibility for its consequences, which may be much farther-reaching in other domains than in the one under dispute.

Moreover, the *board* character of the ministry, with its majority votes, daily compels him to compromise and surrender to his colleagues, in accordance with the Prussian ministerial constitution. A real responsibility in high politics can only be undertaken by one single directing minister, never by a numerous board with majority voting. The decision as to paths and bye-paths often depends on slight but decisive changes, sometimes even on the tone and choice of expressions in an international document. Even the slightest departure from the right line often causes the distance from it to increase so rapidly that the abandoned clue cannot be recovered, and the return to the bifurcation, where it was left behind, becomes impossible. The customary official secrecy conceals for whole generations the circumstances under which the track was left; and the result of the uncertainty in which the operative connexion of things remains, produces in leading ministers, as was the case with many of my predecessors, an indifference to the material side of business

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as soon as the formal side has been settled by a royal signature or by parliamentary votes. In the case of others, the conflict between their own feeling of honour, and the complications caused by the questions of jurisdiction, induces fatal nervous fevers, as in the case of Count Brandenburg, or symptoms of brain-disease, as in some of his predecessors.

It is hard to assign justly the responsibility for our policy during the reign of Frederick William IV. Humanly speaking, it must rest mainly on the King, for he never at any time had superior advisers who could direct him and his business. He retained in his own hands the power of selection among the advice, not only given by each individual minister, but also offered him with far greater frequency by more or less clever aides-de-camp, privy councillors, scholars, dishonest pushers, honest visionaries, and courtiers. And he was often a long time about selecting. It is frequently less disastrous to do the wrong thing than nothing at all. I never had the courage to profit by the opportunities which this very amiable gentleman several times gave me, occasionally in the most pressing manner, to become his minister in the years 1852 to 1856, or to further the realisation of his wishes. From the way in which he regarded me, I should have had no authority in his eyes, and his rich fantasy lacked wings as soon as it ventured on the domain of practical resolve; while I lacked the accommodating disposition which would enable me to take over and represent as a minister political tendencies in which I did not believe, or in the carrying out of which I thought the King deficient in resolution and consistency. He supported and furthered the elements of strife between his indi-

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vidual ministers; the friction between Manteuffel, Bodelschwingh, and Heydt, who carried on a sort of triangular duel, was agreeable to the King and served as a political aid in little private contests between royal and ministerial influence. It was with full knowledge that Manteuffel put up with the camarilla activity of Gerlach, Rauch, Niebuhr, Bunsen, Edwin Manteuffel. His policy was rather defensive than directed at any particular object; muddling along, as Count Taaffe would say, satisfied if he was protected by the royal signature. Still, pure absolutism with a parliament has this advantage, that it gives a feeling of responsibility for one's own actions. Far more dangerous is the absolutism that is supported by accommodating parliaments, and which needs no other justification than a reference to the assent of the majority.

The next favourable situation after the Crimean war was offered to our policy by the Italian war. Not that I believe that King William, even as Regent in 1859, would have been disposed to cross by a sudden decision the gulf which separated his policy at that period from that which afterwards brought about the re-establishment of the German Empire. If the situation of that time is judged by the standard which characterises the attitude of the Foreign Minister, von Schleinitz, in the ensuing conclusion of the guarantee treaty of Teplitz with Austria, and its refusal to recognise Italy, we may well doubt whether it would have been possible at that time to urge the Regent to a policy which would have made the employment of the Prussian armaments dependent on concessions in the policy of the German Federation. The situation was not regarded from the point of view of a forward Prussian policy, but rather in the light of the customary endeavours

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to win the applause of the German Princes, the Austrian Emperor, and the German press, and of the undignified striving after an ideal prize of virtue for devotion to Germany. There was no clear conception of the nature of the goal, the direction in which it was to be sought, or the means of attaining it.

Under the influence of his wife and the party of the "*Wochenblatt,*" the Regent was very near taking part in the Italian war of 1859. Had he done so, the war would have been transferred in its chief issues from an Austro-French to a Prusso-French contest on the Rhine. Russia, in her hatred to Austria, which at that time was still very lively, would at anyrate have made a demonstration against us and Austria as soon as we had become entangled in war with France, and, from her position at the longer end of the political lever, would have calculated how far we might be permitted to be victorious. What Poland was at the time of Thugut, Germany was at this time, on the chess-board. My idea was that we ought at anyrate to prepare for war, but at the same time send an ultimatum to Austria, either to accept our conditions in the German question or to look for our attack. But the fiction of a continuous and self-sacrificing devotion for "Germany" in words only, never in deeds, the influence of the Princess and of her minister von Schleinitz, who was devoted to the Austrian interest, as well as the phrase-mongering of parliaments, associations, and the press, at that time customary, made it difficult for the Regent to test the situation by his own clear homely common-sense; and there was no one in his political or personal surroundings who could explain to him how meaningless was all this phrase-making, and

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represent the cause of a healthy German interest. The Regent and his minister at that time believed in the truth of the saying: *"Il y a quelqu'un qui a plus d'esprit que Monsieur de Talleyrand; c'est tout le monde." Tout le monde,* however, in point of fact takes too long about finding out what is right, and as a rule the moment when the knowledge might be useful is already gone by before *tout le monde* gets at the back of what ought really to have been done.

It was only the internal struggles which he had to encounter as Regent and afterwards as King; only his conviction that his ministers of the new era were not yet in a condition to render his subjects happy and contented, or maintain them in obedience, and to win at the elections and in parliament an expression of the contentment for which he had striven and hoped; only the difficulties which in 1862 had brought the King to resolve on abdication, that were able so far to influence his spirit and sound judgment as to help his monarchical views of 1859 across the bridge of the Danish question, to the point of view of 1866, i.e. from speaking to doing, from phrase to action.

The direction of foreign policy in the very difficult European situation was rendered even more laborious for a minister who wished to pursue a calm and practical policy, without any dynastic sentimentality and courtier-like Byzantinism, by powerful cross-currents. Of these the strongest and most effectual were due to Queen Augusta and her minister Schleinitz, but there were also other princely influences, as well as family correspondence, the insinuations of hostile elements at Court, and no less of the Jesuit organs (Nesselrode, Stillfried, &c.) of intriguers

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and capable rivals, such as Goltz and Harry Arnim, or incapable ones, such as the former ministers and parliamentarians who wished to attain that dignity. It required all the King's honest and noble fidelity for his first servant to keep him from wavering in his confidence towards me.

In the beginning of October I went as far as Jüterbogk to meet the King, who had been at Baden-Baden for September 30, his wife's birthday, and waited for him in the still unfinished railway station, filled with third-class travellers and workmen, seated in the dark on an overturned wheelbarrow. My object in taking this opportunity for an interview was to set his Majesty at rest about a speech made by me in the Budget Commission on September 30, which had aroused some excitement, and which, though not taken down in shorthand, had still been reproduced with tolerable accuracy in the newspapers.

For people who were less embittered and blinded by ambition, I had indicated plainly enough the direction in which I was going. Prussia—such was the point of my speech—as a glance at the map will show, could no longer wear unaided on its long narrow figure the panoply which Germany required for its security; that must be equally distributed over all German peoples. We should get no nearer the goal by speeches, associations, decisions of majorities; we should be unable to avoid a serious contest, a contest which could only be settled by blood and iron. In order to secure our success in this, the deputies must place the greatest possible weight of blood and iron in the hands of the King of Prussia, in order that according to his judgment he might throw it into one scale or the other. I had already given expression

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to the same idea in the House of Deputies in 1849, in answer to Schramm on the occasion of an amnesty debate.[1]

Roon, who was present, expressed his dissatisfaction with my remarks on our way home, and said, among other things, that he did not regard these "witty digressions" as advantageous for our cause. For my part, I was torn between the desire of winning over members to an energetic national policy, and the danger of inspiring the King, whose own disposition was cautious, and shrank from violent measures, with mistrust in me and my intentions. My object in going to meet him at Jüterbogk was to counteract betimes the probable effect of press criticisms.

I had some difficulty in discovering from the curt answers of the officials the carriage in the ordinary train, in which the King was seated by himself in an ordinary first-class carriage. The after-effect of his conversation with his wife was an obvious depression, and when I begged for permission to narrate the events which had occurred during his absence, he interrupted me with the words: "I can perfectly well see where all this will end. Over there, in front of the Opera House, under my windows, they will cut off your head, and mine a little while afterwards."

I guessed, and it was afterwards confirmed by witnesses, that during his week's stay at Baden his mind had been worked upon with variations on the theme of Polignac, Strafford, and Lewis XVI. When he was silent, I answered with the short remark, *"Et après, Sire?"* *"Après,* indeed; we shall be dead," answered the King.

[1] Cf. the speech of March 22, 1849. *Politische Reden,* I. 76, 77.

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"Yes," I continued, "then we shall be dead; but we must all die sooner or later, and can we perish more honourably? I, fighting for my King's cause, and your Majesty sealing with your own blood your rights as King by the grace of God; whether on the scaffold or the battlefield, makes no difference to the glory of sacrificing life and limb for the rights assigned to you by the grace of God. Your Majesty must not think of Lewis XVI.; he lived and died in a condition of mental weakness, and does not present a heroic figure in history. Charles I., on the other hand, will always remain a noble historical character, for after drawing his sword for his rights and losing the battle, he did not hesitate to confirm his royal intent with his blood. Your Majesty is bound to fight, you cannot capitulate; you must, even at the risk of bodily danger, go forth to meet any attempt at coercion."

As I continued to speak in this sense, the King grew more and more animated, and began to assume the part of an officer fighting for kingdom and fatherland. In presence of external and personal danger he possessed a rare and absolutely natural fearlessness, whether on the field of battle or in the face of attempts on his life; his attitude in any external danger was elevating and inspiring. The ideal type of the Prussian officer who goes to meet certain death in the service with the simple words, "At your orders," but who, if he has to act on his own responsibility, dreads the criticism of his superior officer or of the world more than death, even to the extent of allowing his energy and correct judgment to be impaired by the fear of blame and reproof—this type was developed in him to the highest degree. Hitherto, on his journey, he had only asked himself whether,

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under the superior criticism of his wife and public opinion in Prussia, he would be able to keep steadfast on the road on which he was entering with me. The influence of our conversation in the dark railway compartment counteracted this sufficiently to make him regard the part which the situation forced upon him more from the standpoint of the officer. He felt as though he had been touched in his military honour, and was in the position of an officer who has orders to hold a certain position to the death, no matter whether he perishes in the task or not. This set him on a course of thought which was quite familiar to him; and in a few minutes he was restored to the confidence which he had lost at Baden, and even recovered his cheerfulness. To give up his life for King and Fatherland was the duty of an officer; still more that of a King, as the first officer in the land. As soon as he regarded his position from the point of view of military honour, it had no more terror for him than the command to defend what might prove a desperate position would have for any ordinary Prussian officer. This raised him above the anxiety about the criticism which public opinion, history, and his wife might pass on his political tactics. He fully entered into the part of the first officer in the Prussian monarchy, for whom death in the service would be an honourable conclusion to the task assigned him. The correctness of my judgment was confirmed by the fact that the King, whom I had found at Jüterbogk weary, depressed, and discouraged, had, even before we arrived at Berlin, developed a cheerful, I might almost say joyous and combative disposition, which was plainly evident to the ministers and officials who received him on his arrival.

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Even if the alarming historical reminiscences which had been presented to the King at Baden as proofs of short-sighted blundering could only dishonestly or fancifully be applied to our conditions, our situation was still sufficiently serious. Some progressive journals hoped to see me picking oakum for the benefit of the state; and on February 17, 1863, the House of Deputies declared by 274 to 45 that ministers were responsible with their persons and fortunes for unconstitutional expenditure. It was suggested to me, that for the sake of securing my estate I should make it over to my brother. But the cession of my property to my brother in order to avoid its confiscation, which on a change of sovereign might not have been impossible, would have given an impression of alarm and anxiety about money matters which were repugnant to me. Besides this, my seat in the Upper House was attached to Kniephof.

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CHAPTER XIII.

DYNASTIES AND STOCKS.

NEVER, not even at Frankfort, did I doubt that the key to German politics was to be found in princes and dynasties, not in publicists, whether in parliament and the press, or on the barricades. The opinion of the cultivated public as uttered in parliament and the press might promote and sustain the determination of the dynasties, but perhaps provoked their resistance more frequently than it urged them forward in the direction of national unity. The weaker dynasties leant for shelter upon the national cause, rulers and houses that felt themselves more capable of resistance mistrusted the movement, because with the promotion of German unity there was a prospect of the diminution of their independence in favour of the central authority or the popular representative body. The Prussian dynasty might anticipate that the hegemony in the future German Empire would eventually fall to it, with an increase of consideration and power. It could foresee its own advantage, so far as it were not absorbed by a national parliament, in the lowering of status so much dreaded by the other dynasties. From the time that the idea of the dual entity, Austria-Prussia, under the influence of which I had come to the Frankfort Federal Diet, had given place to a sense of the necessity of defending our posi-

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tion against attacks and stratagems on the part of the president, when once I had received the impression that the mutual support of Austria and Prussia was a youthful dream, resulting from the after effects of the war of liberation and the notions of schools, and had convinced myself that the Austria with which I had until then reckoned did not exist for Prussia, I acquired the conviction that on the basis of the authority of the Federal Diet it would not be possible even to recover for Prussia that position which she had held in the *Bund* before the events of March, to say nothing of such a reform of the Federal Constitution as might have afforded the German people a prospect of the realisation of their pretension to a position recognised by international law as one of the great European nations.

I remember a crisis in my views which occurred in Frankfort when Prince Schwarzenberg's despatch of December 7, 1850, till then unknown to me, first came under my eyes. In this he represents the results of Olmütz as if it had depended upon him to "humiliate" Prussia or magnanimously to pardon her. The Mecklenburg envoy, Herr von Oertzen, my honourable Conservative confidant and colleague in dualist policy, with whom I discussed the despatch, attempted to salve my wounded Prussian feelings. Notwithstanding the poor show, so humiliating to those feelings, which we had made at Olmütz and Dresden, I had come to Frankfort well disposed towards Austria. The insight into Schwarzenberg's policy of *avilir puis démolir,* which I there obtained by documentary evidence, dispelled my youthful illusions. The Gordian knot of German circumstance was not to be untied by the gentle methods of dual

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policy, could only be cut by the sword: it came to this, that the King of Prussia, conscious or unconscious, and with him the Prussian army, must be gained for the national cause, whether from the "Borussian" point of view one regarded the hegemony of Prussia or from the national point of view the unification of Germany as the main object: both aims were co-extensive. So much was clear to me, and I hinted at it when in the budget committee (September 30, 1862) I made the much misrepresented deliverance concerning iron and blood (p. 74).

Prussia was nominally a Great Power, at anyrate the fifth. The transcendent genius of Frederick the Great had given her this position, and it had been re-established by the mighty achievements of the people in 1813. But for the chivalrous attitude observed under the influence of Stein, or at anyrate under German influence, by the Emperor Alexander I. from 1812 to the Congress of Vienna, it would have remained a question whether the diplomatic methods of the Humboldts and Hardenbergs of that day, and the timidity of Frederick William III., would have sufficed to turn the national enthusiasm of four million Prussians—the population was no larger at the peace of Tilsit—and of perhaps an equal number of sympathisers in old-Prussian or German lands, to such practical account as to effect even the re-modelling of the Prussian state as it took place in 1815. Prussia's material weight did not then correspond to her moral significance and her achievement in the war of liberation.

In order that German patriotism should be active and effective, it needs as a rule to hang on the peg of

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dependence upon a dynasty; independent of dynasty it rarely comes to the rising-point, though in theory it daily does so, in parliament, in the press, in public meeting; in practice the German needs either attachment to a dynasty or the goad of anger, hurrying him into action: the latter phenomenon, however, by its own nature is not permanent. It is as a Prussian, a Hanoverian, a Wurtemberger, a Bavarian or Hessian, rather than as a German, that he is disposed to give unequivocal proof of patriotism; and in the lower orders and the parliamentary groups it will be long before it is otherwise. We cannot say that the Hanoverian, Hessian, and other dynasties were at any special pains to win the affections of their subjects; but nevertheless the German patriotism of their subjects is essentially conditioned by their attachment to the dynasty after which they call themselves. It is not differences of stock, but dynastic relations upon which in their origin the centrifugal elements repose. It is not attachment to Swabian, Lower Saxon, Thuringian, or other particular stock that counts for most, but the dynastic incorporation with the people of some severed portion of a ruling princely family, as in the instances of Brunswick, Brabant, and Wittelsbach dynasties. The cohesion of the kingdom of Bavaria does not rest merely on the Bajuvarian stock as it is found in South Bavaria and in Austria: the Swabian of Augsburg, the Alleman of the Palatinate, the Frank of the Main, though of widely different blood, call themselves Bavarians with as much satisfaction as does the Old-Bavarian at Munich or Landshut, and for no other reason than that they have been connected with the latter for three generations through the common dynasty. It is to dynastic influences

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that those stocks which present the most marked characteristics, as the Low-German, the *Platt-Deutsch*, the Saxon, owe their greater depth and distinctness of differentiation. The German's love of Fatherland has need of a prince on whom it can concentrate its attachment. Suppose that all the German dynasties were suddenly deposed; there would then be no likelihood that German national sentiment would suffice to hold all Germans together from the point of view of international law amid the friction of European politics, even in the form of federated Hanse towns and imperial village communes. The Germans would fall a prey to more closely welded nations if they once lost the tie which resides in the princes' sense of community of rank.

History shows that in Germany the Prussian stock is that of which the individual character is most strongly stamped, and yet no one could decisively answer the question whether, supposing the Hohenzollern dynasty and all its rightful successors to have passed away, the political cohesion of Prussia would survive. Is it quite certain that the eastern and the western divisions, that Pomeranians and Hanoverians, natives of Holstein and Silesia, of Aachen and Königsberg, would then continue as they now are, bound together in the indisruptible unity of the Prussian state? Or Bavaria—if the Wittelsbach dynasty were to vanish and leave not a trace behind, would Bavaria continue to hold together in isolated unity? Some dynasties have many memories which are not exactly of the kind to inspire attachment in the heterogeneous fragments out of which their states have, as a matter of history, been formed. Schleswig-Holstein has absolutely no dynastic memories, least of all any

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opposed to the House of Gottorp, and yet the prospect of the possible formation there of a small, independent, brand-new little court with ministers, court-marshals, and orders, in which the life of a petty state should be sustained at the cost of what Austria and Prussia could manage in the *Bund,* called forth very strong Particularist movements in the Elbe duchies. The Grand Duchy of Baden has hardly a dynastic memory since the time of the Margrave Ludwig before Belgrade; the rapid growth of this little principality under French protection in the confederation of the Rhine, the court life of the last princes of the old line, the matrimonial alliance with the Beauharnais house, the Caspar Hauser story, the revolutionary proceedings of 1832, the banishment of the Grand Duke Leopold, the citizens' patron, the banishment of the reigning house in 1849, have not been able to break the power which subservience to dynasty has in that country, and Baden in 1866 fought against Prussia and the German idea because constrained thereto by the dynastic interests of the reigning house.

The other nations of Europe have need of no such go-between for their patriotism and national sentiment. Poles, Hungarians, Italians, Spaniards, Frenchmen would under any or without any dynasty preserve their homogeneous national unity. The Teutonic stocks of the north, the Swedes and the Danes, have shown themselves pretty free from dynastic sentiment; and in England, though external respect for the Crown is demanded by good society, and the formal maintenance of monarchy is held expedient by all parties that have hitherto had any share in government, I do not anticipate the disruption of the nation, or that such sentiments as were

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common in the time of the Jacobites would attain to any practical form, if in the course of its historical development the British people should come to deem a dynasty or the transition to a republican form of government necessary or expedient. The preponderance of dynastic attachment, and the use of a dynasty as the indispensable cement to hold together a definite portion of the nation calling itself by the name of the dynasty is a specific peculiarity of the German Empire. The particular nationalities, which among us have shaped themselves on the bases of dynastic family and possession, include in most cases heterogeneous elements, whose cohesion rests neither on identity of stock nor on similarity of historical development, but exclusively on the fact of some (in most cases questionable) acquisition by the dynasty whether by the right of the strong, or hereditary succession by affinity or compact of inheritance, or by some reversionary grant obtained from the imperial Court as the price of a vote.

Whatever may be the origin of this factitious union of Particularist elements, its result is that the individual German readily obeys the command of a dynasty to harry with fire and sword, and with his own hands to slaughter his German neighbours and kinsfolks as a result of quarrels unintelligible to himself. To examine whether this characteristic be capable of rational justification is not the problem of a German statesman, so long as it is strongly enough pronounced for him to reckon upon it. The difficulty of either abolishing or ignoring it, or making any advance in theory towards unity without regard to this practical limitation, has often proved fatal to the champions of unity; conspicuously so

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in the advantage taken of the favourable circumstances in the national movements of 1848—50. The attachment of the modern Guelf party to the old dynasty I fully understand, and to that party perhaps I should myself have belonged had I been born an Old-Hanoverian. But in that case I should never have been able to escape the influence of the national German sentiment, or be surprised if the *vis major* of the collective nationality were relentlessly to annul my dynastic liege-loyalty and personal predilection. How to fall with a good grace! solicitude to solve that problem accords in politics—and not merely in German politics—with other and better justified aspirations; and the Elector of Brunswick's inability to achieve this result impairs in some degree the sympathy which the loyalty of his vassals inspires in me. In the German national sentiment I see the preponderant force always elicited by the struggle with particularism; for particularism—Prussian particularism too—came into being only by resistance to the collective German community, to Emperor and Empire, in revolt from both, leaning first on papal, then on French, in all cases on foreign support, all alike damaging and dangerous to the German community. In regard to the policy of the Guelfic efforts, their earliest historical landmark, the revolt of Henry the Lion before the battle of Legnano, the desertion of Emperor and Empire in the crisis of a most severe and perilous struggle, is for all time decisive.

Dynastic interests are justified in Germany so far as they fit in with the common national imperial interests: the two may very well go hand in hand; and a duke loyal to the Empire in the old sense is in certain cir-

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cumstances more serviceable to the community than would be direct relations between the Emperor and the duke's vassals. So far, however, as dynastic interests threaten us once more with national disintegration and impotence, they must be reduced to their proper measure.

The German people and its national life cannot be portioned out as private possessions of princely houses. It has always been clear to me that this reflection applies to the electoral house of Brandenburg as well as to the Bavarian, the Guelf, or other houses; I should have been weaponless against the Brandenburg princely house, if in dealing with it I had needed to reinforce my German national feeling by rupture and resistance; in the predestination of history, however, it so fell out that my courtier-talents sufficed to gain the King, and with him by consequence his army, for the national cause. I have had perhaps harder battles to fight against Prussian particularism than against the particularism of the other German states and dynasties, and my relation to the Emperor William I. as his born subject made these battles all the harder for me. Yet in the end, despite the strongly dynastic policy of the Emperor, but thanks to his national policy which, dynastically justified, became ever stronger in critical moments, I always succeeded in gaining his countenance for the German side of our development, and that too when a more dynastic and particularist policy prevailed on all other hands. This, as I was situated at Nikolsburg, I was only able to effect with the help of the Crown Prince. The territorial sovereignty of the individual princes had in the course of German history reached an unnaturally high develop-

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ment; the individual dynasties, Prussia not excepted, had never a better historical right than under the Hohenstaufen and Charles V. to partition the German people among them as their private property and claim the sovereign's share in its carcass.

The unlimited sovereignty of the dynasties, of the imperial orders, of the imperial cities, and imperial village communes was won by revolution at the cost of the nation and its unity. It has always impressed me with a sense of the unnatural that the frontier line which, lost to view in moor and heath between Salzwedel and Lüchow, divides the Lower Saxon population of the Old Mark from the Lower Saxon population of Brunswick, should yet assign these two *Platt-Deutsch* speaking populations to two distinct, and, as might in certain circumstances happen, hostile bodies politic, the one ruled from Berlin, the other formerly from London, latterly from Hanover, the right eye as it were fixed on the east and the left eye on the west, so that the peaceable peasants of this district, similar in type and in the intercourse of intermarriage, might be compelled to fire on one another, in the interests on the one hand of Guelfs and Habsburgs, on the other hand of Hohenzollerns. The mere possibility of this shows the depth and strength of the influence of dynastic attachments upon the Germans. That the dynasties have at all times been stronger than press and parliament is established by the fact that in 1866 countries belonging to the *Bund*, whose dynasties lay within the sphere of Austrian influence, disregarded national policy and sided with Austria, those alone which lay under the Prussian guns throwing in their lot with Prussia. Hanover, Hesse, and Hanau were of course

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not in the latter category, since they thought Austria strong enough to refuse compliance with the Prussian demands, and conquer. In consequence they paid the reckoning, since it proved impossible to reconcile King William to the idea that Prussia at the head of the North German confederation hardly needed an accession of territory. Certain however it is that, as of old, so also in 1866, the material force of the confederate states followed the dynasties and not the parliaments, and that Saxon, Hanoverian, and Hessian blood was spilt, not to advance but to retard the unification of Germany.

The dynasties formed everywhere the points about which the German impulse towards segregation set its crystals in closer array.

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CHAPTER XIV.

THE MINISTRY OF CONFLICT.

In the distribution of offices, for which the choice of candidates was limited, the portfolio of Finance was that which caused the least delay; it was allotted to Charles von Bodelschwingh, who had already held it under Manteuffel from 1851 to 1858. He was brother of Ernest von Bodelschwingh, who had resigned the Ministry of the Interior in March 1848. It was soon manifest indeed that he and Count Itzenplitz, who received the portfolio of Commerce, were not competent heads of their departments. Both limited themselves to appending their signatures to the resolutions of their expert advisers, and perhaps accommodating matters when the conclusions of advisers, half Liberal, half hidebound in narrow departmental ideas, were likely to come into collision with the policy of the King and his ministry. The majority of these highly expert members of the Department of Finance were at heart with the opposition against the ministry of conflict, which they regarded as a brief episode in the progressive liberalisation of the bureaucratic machine; and though the most able of them were too conscientious to hamper the action of the government, yet, when their official sense of duty permitted, they offered a passive resistance, which was at anyrate not inconsiderable. This state of things produced a strange

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situation: Bodelschwingh, who in respect of his personal convictions constituted the Extreme Right of the ministry, commonly gave his vote on the Extreme Left.

Equally unfit was the Minister of Commerce, Count Itzenplitz, to steer for himself his overladen ministerial bark: he allowed himself to be borne along by the current which his subordinates made for him. Perhaps it would have been impossible to find for the manifold ramifications of the Ministry of Commerce of that day a chief who would have been qualified to lead his subordinates in all the technical matters which fell within his province; but Count Itzenplitz was far less *au fait* in the solution of the problems which came before him than for example, von der Heydt, and in technical questions fell all but helplessly under the guidance of the experts, Delbrück in particular. Moreover, he was of a yielding disposition and lacked the energy needful for the administration of so great a department. Dishonest practices were imputed to certain prominent colleagues in the Ministry of Commerce. To a man of honour, and such the chief certainly was, this was in the last degree disquieting; yet he hardly knew how to proceed, because the technical assistance of the officials whom he himself suspected seemed to him indispensable. Support for my policy I could not expect from either of the colleagues I am speaking of, whether I estimated their powers of comprehending it or the measure of good-will which they might have to spare for me, a junior President not originally belonging to the service.

I found von Jagow, Minister of the Interior, a minister who, by the animation of his tone, his verbosity and dogmatism in discussion, soon incurred the dislike of

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his colleagues in such a degree as to cause him to be replaced by Count Frederick Eulenburg. His character is shown by an experience which we had of him after he had left us and been installed in the place of *"Oberpräsident"* at Potsdam. Pending certain negotiations of importance to the city of Berlin he acted as departmental intermediary between the government and the communal authorities. By reason of the urgency of the business the Head Burgomaster was requested to repair to Potsdam, receive by word of mouth the proposals of the *"Oberpräsident"* in regard to a crucial point, and make his report at an evening meeting of the ministry called for the express purpose. The Burgomaster was closeted for two hours with the *"Oberpräsident,"* but when he presented himself at the meeting to make his report he explained that he had none to make, because during the two hours that elapsed between his trains he had not been able to address a remark to the *"Oberpräsident."* He had persisted to the verge of discourtesy in attempting to state his question, but had always and with ever increasing energy been silenced by his superior with the words: "Permit me—I have not yet done; have the goodness to let me finish what I have to say." On the score of business the report of the *"Oberbürgermeister"* was vexatious, but by recalling former personal experiences it provoked some merriment.

The talents of my Agricultural colleague, von Selchow, did not correspond to his antecedent reputation in provincial administration. The King had intended to give him the Ministry of the Interior, then of all offices the most important. After a long conversation, in which I made the acquaintance of Selchow, I begged his Majesty

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to abandon that idea, because I thought Selchow unequal to the demands of the office, and proposed in his stead Count Frederick von Eulenburg. Both gentlemen had masonic relations with the King, and had only been offered place in December during the difficulties which attended the completion of the administration. The King had doubts of Count Eulenburg's practical command of the administrative detail belonging to the Home department, and was disposed to give him the Ministry of Commerce, that of Agriculture to Itzenplitz, the Home Office to Selchow. I explained to him at large that, in respect of practical knowledge of departmental work, Eulenburg and Selchow were pretty much on a par, and that in any case that was to be looked for rather from their advisers than from themselves, that in this case I laid more stress on personal endowments, address, and knowledge of men than on antecedent technical training. I was willing to allow that Eulenburg was indolent and fond of pleasure, but on the other hand he was judicious and ready, and if as Minister of the Interior he should by-and-by be called upon to stand foremost in the breach, the need of defending himself and returning the blows which he received would spur him into activity. The King at last gave in to me, and to-day I still think that in the circumstances my selection was right; for however I may myself have from time to time suffered by my friend Eulenburg's want of industry and conscientiousness, yet when he was in the mood for work he was an able coadjutor, he was always a well-bred gentleman, though not entirely devoid of jealousy and touchiness in regard to me. When he was called upon for more continuous, more self-denying, more strenuous

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exertions than ordinary, he would fall a prey to nervous disorders. At all events he and Roon were the most eminent members of the ministry of conflict.

Roon, however, was the only one of my later colleagues who at my entrance upon office knew of its intended consequences and the common plan of operations, and discussed the latter with me. He was unequalled in the loyalty, staunchness, and resourcefulness with which, before and after my accession to power, he helped to surmount the crisis in which the state had been involved by the "new era" experiment. He understood his department and governed it, was our best speaker, a man of good wits, and not to be shaken in the sentiments of an honourable Prussian officer. He shared with Eulenburg his perfect comprehension of political questions, but was a more consequent thinker, safer, and more circumspect. His private life was without reproach. My friendship with him dated from the days of my boyhood—from 1833, when he spent some time on surveying business at my father's house; and I have sometimes suffered under his wrath, which readily rose to a point at which it endangered his health. While he was holding the office of President, which I had relinquished to him on account of ill-health in 1873, pushing people like Harry Arnim and young military officers, the same who with their allies in the *"Kreuzzeitung"* and in the columns of the *"Reichsglocke"* were working against me, reverted to him, and attempted to estrange him from me. His tenure of the presidency came to an end on the initative of the rest of my colleagues without any co-operation on my part. They missed in him—his irascibility grew with years, nor was he favourably impressed

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by our coadjutors in civil business—that formal courtesy which they demanded in intercourse with their colleagues, and made overtures to me, and confidentially through Eulenburg to the King, for my resumption of office. The result was that, without my will and to my regret, chiefly through gossipmongering, there came to be in Roon's last years not exactly a coldness, but a certain distance between us, and on my side the sense that my best friend and comrade had not confronted the lies and calumnies which were systematically circulated about me as decisively as I hope I should have done if his case had been mine.

The Minister of Religion, von Mühler, nearly resembled his successor, von Gossler, in the manner in which he applied himself to business, except that he was influenced by the energy and amateur participation in affairs of his clever and, when she saw fit, amiable wife, and was probably governed by her stronger will. That, of course, in the first instance, I did not learn by direct observation; it could only be inferred from the impression which the two personages left on my mind in social intercourse. I remember that at Gastein, as early as August 1865, I was compelled to insist to the point of discourtesy on having a private interview with von Mühler in regard to a certain royal mandate before I could succeed in inducing the *"Frau Ministerin"* to leave us alone. The occurrence of such a necessity brought in its train misunderstandings which did not indeed intrude into my business relations with him in the course of his practical conduct of affairs, but yet did impair the harmony of our familiar intercourse. Frau von Mühler took her direction in politics not from her husband, but

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from the Queen, with whom she sought above all things to keep in touch. The atmosphere of the Court, questions of precedence, openly declared intimacy with a royal person, exert not seldom an influence on "*Ministerfrauen*" which makes itself felt in politics; the personal policy of the Empress Augusta, a policy which usually ran counter to the interests of the state, found in Frau von Mühler a ready instrument, and von Mühler himself, though a keen-sighted and honourable official, was not decided enough in his convictions to refuse concessions to domestic peace which could only be made at the cost of the state, when they could pass unnoticed.

It was perhaps from his practice as Attorney-General that the Minister of Justice, Count zur Lippe, had retained his habit of making the most cutting remarks with a smiling face and a supercilious air of superiority; whereby he gave offence both in parliament and to his colleagues. He stood with Bodelschwingh on our Extreme Right, and defended his own line more keenly than Bodelschwingh, because he was sufficiently *au fait* in the details of his department to follow his personal convictions, whereas Bodelschwingh could not manage the business of his office without the willing co-operation of his practical advisers, who in their political views inclined far more to the Left than either their chief or the ministry at large.

The question of constitutional law, which was the subject of the Conflict, and the view thereof taken by the ministry and approved by the King, is set forth in a letter from his Majesty to Lieutenant-Colonel von Vincke

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at Olbendorf near Grottkau. The letter was noticed at the time in the press, but has never, so far as I remember, been published,[1] though it is the more deserving of publicity, inasmuch as it affords an explanation of the attitude of the King on the question of the indemnity.

New Year's Day 1863 brought to the King a congratulatory letter from Vincke which concluded with the words: "The people are loyal to your Majesty, but tenacious also of the right which Article 99 of the Constitution unequivocally guarantees to them. God in His grace avert the unhappy consequences of a great misunderstanding!"

The King replied on January 2, 1863: "To your kind wishes for the New Year I return my best thanks. That the New Year opens no agreeable prospect needs no proof. But how you should run on to the horn of the idea that I do not know the temper of the vast majority of the people is to me incomprehensible; nor can you have read my answers to the many deputations that have presented loyal addresses. Again and again have I repeated that my confidence in my people is unshaken because I know that it is reciprocated; but those who would rob me of my people's love and confidence, them I condemn because their plans can only be carried into effect if this confidence is shaken. And that they deem this an end justifying all means is known to all the world, for only lying, only fraud and falsehood can bring their projects to maturity.

"You continue: 'the people demand that effect be

[1] It is published in L. Schneider, "*Aus dem Leben Wilhelms I.*" vol. I. 194-97.

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given to Article 99 of the Constitution.' I should like to know how many of them know the tenor of Article 99, or have even so much as heard of it. That however is neither here nor there, for the clause exists for the government and must be complied with. Who then has made it impossible that effect should be given to it? Have I not made in winter session and renewed in summer session the sacrifice of four millions, and accordingly modified, alas, the military budget? Have I not, alas, made several other sacrifices in order to show that the government is prepared to make advances towards the new House? And what has been the consequence? That the House of Representatives has acted as if I had made no advances towards it, has exerted itself to secure ever more and more concessions, which in the end would have the effect of making government impossible. He who avails himself of his right for such a purpose as that, i.e. who reduces the budget to such a point that the whole business of government comes to an end, is only fit for a madhouse. In what clause of the Constitution is it laid down that only the government is to make concessions, and the representatives never? After I had made mine in unheard-of amplitude it was for the House of Representatives to make theirs. This, however, the House would on no terms do, and the so-called 'episode' made it clearer than sunlight that we were to be beset with snare after snare, into which even your kinsman Patow and Schwerin fell through Bockum-Dolffs's bad behaviour. A further abatement of 234,000 *Reichsthaler* must be made for 1862 in order to carry the budget, though the kernel of the question could not be discusssed until 1863; this was expressly stated in

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print; and when I consent, then for the first time Bockum-Dolffs explains that on their side, that is on the side of his political friends, this consent can only be accepted if a pledge be given forthwith in the committee, and next day in the whole House a measure be introduced, for the reduction of the term of service to two years. And when I refuse to consent, Bockum-Dolffs derides us in his press: 'Now think,' he says, 'of the shamelessness of the government, that it should expect the House to offer peace at the price of 234,000 *Reichsthaler.*' And yet was it only by the House that peace was offered? Was any more infamous misrepresentation ever made for the purpose of traducing the government and bewildering the people?

"The House of Representatives has availed itself of its right, and reduced the budget.

"The Upper House has availed itself of its right and thrown out the reduced budget *en bloc.*

"What does the Constitution prescribe in such a case?

"Nothing.

"Since then, as shown above, the House of Representatives so used its right as to bring army and country alike to nought, it became incumbent on me to intervene in the interests of this 'nought,' and like a prudent head of a household to pilot the household through its straits, and give account afterwards. Who then has made compliance with Article 99 impossible? Not I for certain.

"WILLIAM."

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CHAPTER XV.

THE ALVENSLEBEN CONVENTION.

CONTEMPORANEOUS and not unconnected with the revolution in Italy, a movement began in Poland, the springs of which lay in the distress of the country, the observance by the Church of the national patriotic festivals, and the excitement which prevailed in the rural associations. Towards this movement feeling in St. Petersburg remained for a good while undecided, being dominated in about equal measure by absolutist principles and Polish sympathies. In the higher circles of Russian society the influences which made for Poland were connected with the now outspoken demand for a constitution. It was felt as a degradation that a cultivated people like the Russians should be denied institutions which existed in all European nations, and should have no voice in the managment of their own affairs. The division of opinion on the Polish question penetrated the highest military circles, and led to a hot dispute between Count Lambert, Governor of Warsaw, and Governor-General Gerstenberg, which terminated with the unexplained death by violence of the latter (January 1862). I was present at his interment in one of the evangelical churches in St. Petersburg. Those Russians who demanded a constitution for themselves pleaded at times in excuse for the Poles that they were not governable by

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Russians, and that as they grew more civilised they became entitled to a share in the administration of their country. This view was also represented by Prince Gortchakoff, who would have found in parliamentary institutions a sphere in which his eloquence might have gained European *éclat*, while his craving for popularity rendered him powerless to withstand the liberal tendencies of Russian "society." He was the first to sound the note of applause on the acquittal of Vera Sassulitch (April 11, 1878).

The conflict of opinion was very lively in St. Petersburg when I left that capital in April 1862, and it so continued throughout my first year of office. I took charge of the Foreign Office under the impression that the insurrection which had broken out on January 1, 1863, brought up the question not only of the interests of our eastern provinces, but also that wider one, whether the Russian cabinet were dominated by Polish or anti-Polish proclivities, by an effort after Russo-Polish fraternisation in the anti-German Panslavist interest or by one for mutual reliance between Russia and Prussia. The policy of fraternisation found its more sincere adherents among the Russians; the Polish nobility and clergy hardly anticipated any result from it, or proposed it as the definite end. Hardly a single Pole was there for whom the policy of fraternisation meant more than a tactical move designed to deceive credulous Russians so long as necessity or expediency required. In the Polish nobility and clergy fraternisation with Russians excited, not quite, but almost as unalterable a repugnance as fraternisation with Germans; the greater strength of the latter antipathy being due not merely to race, but to the belief

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that Germans would never submit to the direction of the common policy by Polish statesmen, whereas Russians might.

For the German future of Prussia the attitude of Russia was a question of great importance. A philo-Polish Russian policy was calculated to vivify that Russo-French sympathy against which Prussia's effort had been directed since the peace of Paris, and indeed on occasion earlier, and an alliance (friendly to Poland) between Russia and France, such as was in the air before the Revolution of July, would have placed the Prussia of that day in a difficult position. It was our interest to oppose the party in the Russian cabinet which had Polish proclivities, even when they were the proclivities of Alexander I.

That Russia herself afforded no security against fraternisation with Poland I was able to gather from confidential intercourse with Gortchakoff and the Czar himself. Czar Alexander was at that time not indisposed to withdraw from part of Poland, the left bank of the Vistula at anyrate—so he told me in so many words—while he made unemphatic exception of Warsaw, which would always be desirable as a garrison town, and belonged strategically to the Vistula fortress triangle. Poland, he said, was for Russia a source of unrest and dangerous European complications; its Russification was forbidden by the difference of religion and the defective capacity for administration among Russian officials. Were it our task to Germanise Poland, we should be equal to it, because the German population was more cultivated than the Polish. The Russ had not that sense of superiority which was needful for ruling the Pole; Rus-

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sian administration must therefore be limited to as small a portion of the population as the geographical situation permitted, i.e. to the line of the Vistula with Warsaw as *tête de pont.*

I can form no judgment how far the policy thus expounded by the Czar had been maturely considered. It must have been discussed with statesmen, for I have never known the Czar open his mind to me in regard to a question of policy on his own entirely independent personal initiative. This conversation took place at the time when my recall was already probable, and my expression, not merely polite but entirely truthful, of regret at my recall and willingness to remain at St. Petersburg was misunderstood by the Czar and elicited from him the question whether I were inclined to enter the Russian service. To this I returned a courteous negative, while emphasising my desire to remain at St. Petersburg as Prussian ambassador. It would then have been not displeasing to me if the Czar had taken steps to retain me, for the idea of becoming the instrument of the policy of the "new era," whether as minister or as ambassador at Paris or London, without the prospect of helping forward our policy, was by no means seductive. I knew not how at London or Paris I could serve my country according to my convictions, whereas my influence with Czar Alexander and his principal statesmen had its importance for our interests. As for becoming Foreign Minister, I had then just as lief have taken a sea-bath in cold weather; but not all these feelings together were strong enough to induce me to make an attempt to determine my own future or to address a petition to Czar Alexander for such a purpose.

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When, after all, I had become minister, domestic took precedence of foreign policy. However, of our foreign relations I was most nearly interested in those which subsisted between us and Russia by reason of my immediate past; and my efforts were directed to assure for our policy, if possible, the continuance of that influence which we possessed in St. Petersburg. It was obvious that, so far as concerned Germany, Prussian policy had no support to expect from Austria. It was not likely that the benevolence with which France regarded our growing strength, and the progress made towards the unification of Germany, would in the long run prove sincere; but that was no reason for neglecting to turn to account the transitory and miscalculated support and furtherance which Napoleon afforded us. With Russia we stood on the same footing as with England, in so far as with neither had we divergent interests of capital importance, and with both were united by an ancient amity. From England we might expect platonic goodwill, with letters and newspaper articles full of good advice, but hardly more. The support of the Czar, on the other hand, as the Hungarian expedition of Nicholas had shown, meant in certain circumstances more than mere benevolent neutrality. That he would be actuated by mere regard for us was not to be supposed; but it was certainly no chimerical idea that in case of any attempt at French intervention in the German question Czar Alexander would, at anyrate by his diplomacy, assist us in defeating it. The bent of this monarch's policy, which jnstified my calculation, was still manifest in 1870, whereas the friendly neutrality of England was then found compatible with French sympathies. I held,

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therefore, that every sympathy which, in opposition to many of his subjects and highest officials, Alexander II. cherished for us, was on all accounts to be fostered by us so far as was necessary to secure, if possible, that Russia should not take part against us. It was not then possible to forecast with certainty whether and how long the Czar's friendship would remain a realisable political asset. In any case, however, simple common-sense enjoined us not to let it fall into the possession of our enemies, whom we might discern in the Poles, the philo-Polish Russians, and, ultimately, probably in the French. Austria was then preoccupied with her rivalry with Prussia on German territory and could the more easily come to terms with the Polish movement because, notwithstanding the memories of 1846 and the price then set on the heads of the Polish nobles, she still retained more of their sympathy and the sympathy of the Polish clergy than either Prussia or Russia.

To harmonise the Austro-Polish with the Prusso-Polish plans of fraternisation will always be difficult; but the considerate treatment which in 1863 Austria, in concert with the Western Powers, accorded to the Polish movement showed that she had no fear of Russian rivalry in a resuscitated Poland. ¡Thrice had she, in April, in June, and on August 12, joined with France and England in making representations at St. Peterburg in the interest of Poland. "We have," so runs the Austrian note of June 18,[1] "laboured to ascertain the conditions under which peace and quiet can be restored to the kingdom of Poland, and have come to the conclusion that they

[1] French text in the *State Archives*, v. 354 sqq. No. 887.

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may be summed up in the following six points, which we commend to the consideration of the cabinet of St. Petersburg: 1. Complete and universal amnesty; 2. A national representative system participating in legislative functions and invested with an effective control; 3. The appointment of Poles to public offices in such manner that a separate national administration may be formed capable of inspiring confidence in the country; 4. Perfect and entire liberty of conscience, and abolition of restrictions upon the exercise of the Catholic religion; 5. Exclusive use of the Polish tongue as the official language for the purposes of administrative and judicial business and public instruction; 6. The establishment of a regular and legal system of recruiting."

Gortchakoff's proposal that Russia, Austria, and Prussia should unite to determine the destiny of their respective Polish subjects was rejected by the Austrian government with the declaration "that the accord already established between the three cabinets of Vienna, London, and Paris constituted a bond from which Austria could not now free herself in order to act separately with Russia." This was the situation in which Czar Alexander informed his Majesty at Gastein by a letter in his own hand that he had determined to draw the sword, and sought Prussia's alliance.

It cannot be doubted that the *entente cordiale* then existing with the two Western Powers had contributed to the determination of Emperor Francis Joseph to make the push against Prussia with the Congress of Princes. Of course he would thereby have made a mistake through ignorance of the fact that Napoleon was already weary

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of the Polish affair and anxious to find a decent pretext for retreat. Count Goltz wrote me on August 31 [1]:

"You will see by what I said to you to-day that Cæsar and I are one heart and soul (in truth he was never, not even at the commencement of my mission, so amiable and confidential as now), that Austria has by her Diet of Princes rendered us a great service in respect of our relations with France, and that (thanks also to the absence of Metternich, and the departure to-day of the exalted lady [2] his friend) we need only a satisfactory adjustment of the Polish differences in order to revert to a political situation in which we may confront coming events with confidence.

"With the intimations of the Emperor in regard to the Polish business I have not been able to coincide so far as I could have wished. He seemed to expect from me an offer of mediation, but the utterances of the King held me back. In any event it seems to me advisable to strike the iron while it is hot: the Emperor's claims are now more modest than ever, and it is to be apprehended that he may revert to stronger demands if perchance Austria, by an increased compliance in the Polish question, should endeavour to repair the disaster of Frankfort. His present desire is only to get out of the affair with honour; he acknowledges the six points to be bad, will therefore be glad to shut one eye at the practical performance of them, and perhaps just as well pleased if no stringent forms compel him to insist upon their strict execution. My only fear is that, if the affair continues to be managed as heretofore, the Russians should

[1] *Bismarck-Jahrbuch*, v. 219 f.
[2] The Empress Eugénie.

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deprive us of the credit of settling it by anticipating our advice by their independent action. In this connexion the journey of the Grand Duke, who has not been publicly recalled, seems to me suspicious. How if Czar Alexander were now to proclaim a constitution, and notify Napoleon of it by an obligation written in his own hand? [Cf. Ems, 1870.] This would be better than the protraction of the dispute, but less to our advantage than if we had said beforehand to Napoleon, 'We are prepared to advise it; would you be satisfied with it?'"

Fourteen days before the date of this letter this suggestion, that we should advise Czar Alexander to take the course indicated, had been made point blank by General Fleury to a member of the Prussian embassy. It was not followed, and the diplomatic campaign of the three powers came to nought.

In the Polish question Austria is confronted by no such difficulties as for us are indissolubly bound up with the re-establishment of Polish independence, difficulties incident to the adjustment of the respective claims of Poles and Germans in Poland and West Prussia, and to the situation of East Prussia. Our geographical position, and the intermixture of both nationalities in the eastern provinces, including Silesia, compel us to retard, as far as possible, the opening of the Polish question, and even in 1863 made it appear advisable to do our best not to facilitate, but to obviate the opening of this question by Russia. Prior to 1863 there were occasions when St. Petersburg entertained the Wielopolskian idea of sending General Duke Constantine to Poland as viceroy —accompanied by his beautiful wife, who dressed *à la Polonaise*—and, if possible, giving practical effect to the

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Polish constitution, which, conceded by Alexander I, subsisted in form in the time of the old Grand Duke Constantine.

The Prussian policy embodied in the military convention concluded by General Gustav von Alvensleben in February 1863 had a diplomatic rather than a military significance.[1] It stood for the victory in the Russian cabinet of Prussian over Polish policy, the latter represented by Gortchakoff, Grand Duke Constantine, Wielopolski, and other influential people. The issue was determined by the personal decision of the Czar, in opposition to the policy of his ministers. An agreement between Russia and the German foe of Panslavism for joint action, military and political, against the Polish *"Bruderstamm"* movement was a decisive blow to the views of the philo-Polish party at the Russian court; and as such the agreement, though in a military sense little more than a salve, amply accomplished its purpose. It was not positively demanded by the military situation, with which the Russian troops were strong enough to cope. The forces of the insurgents existed in great measure only in the despatches bespoken from Paris, and manufactured in Myslowitz, dated now from the frontier, now from the seat of war, now from Warsaw, despatches in some cases quite fabulous, which first appeared in a Berlin journal and then made the tour of the European press. The convention said "checkmate" in the game which anti-Polish monarchism was then playing against philo-Polish Panslavism within the Russian cabinet.

[1] Cf. with what follows Bismarck's letter to Count Bernstorff, dated March 9, 1863, *Bismarck-Jahrbuch*, VI. 172 ff.

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The Polish question threw Prince Gortchakoff into alternate phases of absolutism and—not exactly Liberalism—but parliamentarism. He thought himself a great speaker, indeed was so, and was fond of imagining the thrill of admiration which his eloquence might propagate through Europe from a tribune in Warsaw or in Russia. It was assumed that liberal concessions, if granted to the Poles, could not be withheld from the Russians; Russian constitutionalists were therefore philo-Polish.

While public opinion with us was busy with the Polish question, and the Alvensleben convention aroused the unintelligent indignation of the Liberals in the Diet, Herr Hintzpeter was introduced to me at a gathering at the Crown Prince's. As he was in daily communication with the royalties, and gave himself out to me as a man of Conservative opinions, I ventured upon a conversation with him, in which I set forth my views of the Polish question, in the expectation that he would now and again find opportunity of giving expression to it. Some days later he wrote me that the Crown Princess had asked to know the subject of our long conversation. He had recounted it all to her, and had then reduced it to writing. He sent me the memorandum with the request that I would examine it, and make any needful corrections. I answered that with this request I could not comply. If I did so, it would be consonant with what he himself told me, if I communicated on the question, not with him, but with the Crown Princess, in writing; but I was not at present prepared to go beyond word of mouth.

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CHAPTER XVI.

THE DANTZIG EPISODE.

EMPEROR FREDERICK, son of the monarch whom I designate specifically my master, made it easy for me, by his amiability and confidence, to transfer to him the affection which I had cherished for his father. He was more open than his father had been to the constitutional idea that I as minister bore the responsibility for the policy of the crown. He was also less hampered by family traditions in adjusting himself to political necessities, domestic and foreign. All assertions of lasting discord in our relations are unfounded. A discord indeed, but only shortlived, was occasioned by the transaction in Dantzig, in speaking of which the publication of the posthumous papers of Max Duncker [1] permits me to use less reserve than would otherwise have been the case. On May 31, 1863, the Crown Prince started for the province of Prussia to review the army there. Before leaving he begged the King in writing to avoid any issuing of regulations. He travelled in the same train with von Winter, Burgomaster of Dantzig, whom he invited into his *coupé*, and afterwards visited on his estate at Culm. On June 2 the Crown Princess followed him to Graudenz; on the day before had appeared the royal

[1] R. Haym, "*Das Leben Max Dunckers*" (Berlin 1891), pp. 292-3.

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press ordinance founded on a ministerial report which was published at the same time. On June 4 his Royal Highness addressed a letter to the King in which he expressed disapproval of this decree, complained that he had not been summoned to the councils in which the step had been discussed, and enlarged on the duties which, in his opinion, his position as heir apparent laid upon him. On June 5 his reception by the civic authorities took place in the town hall of Dantzig. In the course of the ceremony von Winter expressed his regret that present circumstances did not permit the full outspoken utterance of the joy of the town. The reply of the Crown Prince was in part as follows: "I also lament that I should have come here at a time when a variance has occurred between the government and the people which has occasioned me no small degree of surprise. Of the proceedings which have brought it about I knew nothing. I was absent. I have had no part in the deliberations which have produced this result. But we all, and I especially, I who best know the noble and fatherly intentions and magnanimous sentiments of his Majesty the King, we all, I say, are confident that, under the sceptre of his Majesty the King, Prussia continues to make sure progress towards the future which Providence has marked out for her."

Copies of the *Danziger Zeitung*, containing an account of the occurrence, were sent to the offices of Berlin and other newspapers which, owing to its essentially local character, were not accustomed to take in the *Danziger Zeitung*. The words of the Crown Prince were thus circulated forthwith far and wide, and created, as may well be imagined, a sensation both at home and

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abroad. From Graudenz he transmitted to me a formal protest against the press ordinance which he requested me to lay before the ministry, subject however to the good pleasure of the King. On the 7th his Majesty returned a grave answer to his complaint of the 4th. He then asked his father's pardon for a step which he had deemed it incumbent on him not to omit in the interest of his own and his children's future, and placed all his offices at the disposal of the King. On the 11th he received the royal answer, which assured him of the forgiveness that he craved, ignored his censure of the ministers and his tender of resignation, and enjoined upon him silence for the future.

While I could not but acknowledge the justice of the King's resentment, I did my best to prevent its manifestation by official or indeed by any publicly recognisable acts. Dynastic interests required me to make it my business to calm the King, and to restrain him from taking any steps which might have recalled the days of Frederick William I. and Küstrin. To this end I mainly used the opportunity afforded on June 10 by a drive from Babelsberg to the New Palace, where his Majesty was to inspect the cadet battalion. Lest it should be understood by the servants on the box, the conversation was carried on in French. I succeeded in applying to the father's irritation the healing balm of state policy, which, in view of the impending struggle between prerogative and parliament, enjoined that differences within the royal house should be muffled, ignored, buried in silence; and that the King, both as King and as father, should be especially solicitous that his interests should not suffer in either character. "Deal tenderly with the boy Absalom," I said in allusion

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to the fact that country parsons were already beginning to preach on 2 Samuel xv. 3, 4. "Let your Majesty decide nothing in wrath; state policy alone can rightfully determine your conduct." The King seemed to be particularly impressed when I reminded him that in the conflict between Frederick William I. and his son the sympathy of contemporaries and posterity was with the latter, and that it was not advisable to make the Crown Prince a martyr.

After the affair had been at least apparently disposed of by the above-mentioned correspondence between the father and son, I received from Stettin a letter from the Crown Prince dated June 30, a letter censuring my entire policy in strong terms. It lacked sympathy and consideration for the people, it was supported by very doubtful constructions of the constitution, would render the constitution worthless in the eyes of the people, and force the people to transgress it. On the other hand, the ministry would advance from one strained interpretation to another, and finally would advise the King to an open breach. He would pray the King to permit him while this ministry remained in office to take no further part in its deliberations.

The fact that after this utterance on the part of the heir apparent I held on in the course I had taken shows conclusively that I set no store by remaining in office after the change of sovereign, which, it was likely enough, might very soon take place. For all that, the Crown Prince compelled me to make an express declaration to this effect in a conversation to which I shall have to refer later on.

To the King's surprise, on June 16 or 17, a paragraph

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appeared in the "Times" to the following effect: "While travelling on military duty, the Prince allowed himself to assume an attitude antagonistic to the policy of the Sovereign, and to call in question his measures. The least that he could do to atone for this grave offence was to retract his statements. This the King demanded of him by letter, adding that, if he refused, he would be deprived of his honours and offices. The Prince, in concert, it is said, with her Royal Highness the Princess, met this demand with a firm answer. He refused to retract anything, offered to resign his honours and commands, and craved leave to withdraw with his wife and family to some place where he would be free from suspicion of the least connexion with affairs of state. This letter is described as a remarkable performance, and it is added that the Prince is to be congratulated on having a consort who not only shares his Liberal views, but is also able to render him so much assistance in a momentous and critical juncture. It is not easy to conceive a more difficult position than that of the princely pair placed, without a single adviser, between a self-willed sovereign and a mischievous cabinet on the one hand, and an incensed people on the other."

Attempts were made to discover the purveyor of this article, but without definite result. Circumstantial evidence threw suspicion on Meyer, councillor to the embassy. The more detailed communications made to the *Grenzboten* and the *Süddeutsche Post* by Brater, a member of the House of Representatives, seem to have come through the channel of a petty German diplomatist,[1] who was in the confidence of the Crown Prince and

[1] Geffcken.

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Princess. This confidence he retained, and a quarter of a century later abused by the indiscreet publication of manuscripts entrusted to him by the Prince. Of the truth of the Crown Prince's assertion that the publication of the *Times* article was entirely without his cognisance I have never entertained a doubt, not even after reading what he wrote to Max Duncker on July 14,[1] that he would hardly be surprised if, on Bismarck's side, means had been found to procure copies of his correspondence with the King. I believed that the prime responsibility for the publication was to be sought in the same quarter, to which, in my belief, the Prince owed the bent of his political views. What I observed during the French war, and later what I have gathered from Duncker's papers, have confirmed the view which I then took. For a quarter of a century a whole school of political writers had extolled what, without any thorough comprehension of it, they called the English constitution, as a model to be imitated by continental nations. What wonder then that the Crown Princess and her mother overlooked that peculiar character of the Prussian state which renders its administration by means of shifting parliamentary groups a sheer impossibility? What wonder that this error bred the further mistake of anticipating for the Prussia of the nineteenth century a repetition of the civil broils and catastrophes of the England of the seventeenth century unless the system by which they were terminated were introduced among us? I was informed at the time that in April 1863 memoranda criticising the domestic condition of Prussia, carefully prepared by President Ludolf Camphausen at the instance of Queen Augusta

[1] *Leben Dunckers*, p. 308.

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and by Baron von Stockmar at the instance of the Crown Princess, were laid before the King. I have not been able to determine precisely whether this report was true or false; but that the Queen, to whose *entourage* counsellor Meyer belonged, was then full of apprehension of catastrophes similar to those which befell the Stuarts, I knew for certain; indeed, in 1862 it was already plainly apparent to me in the dejected frame of mind in which the King returned from his wife's birthday *fête* at Baden.[1] The party of progress, then daily anticipating a victorious termination to its struggle with prerogative, availed itself of the opportunities which the press and individual leaders of opinion afforded to place the situation in the light best calculated to influence female minds.

In August the Crown Prince paid me a visit at Gastein. There, less under the sway of English influences, he spoke of his conduct like one conscious of a native want of independence, and full of veneration for his father. Modestly and gracefully, he traced his error to its source in his imperfect political training and aloofness from affairs; in short, he used the unreserved language of one who sees that he has done wrong and seeks to excuse himself on the score of the influences under which he had lain. In September, after we had returned to Berlin, the King with me by Baden, the Crown Prince direct from Gastein, the influences and apprehensions which had dictated his action in June regained the upper hand. On the day following the dissolution of the House of Representatives, he wrote me:

[1] See above, pp. 74-76.

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"Berlin, 3/9/63.

"I have to-day imparted to his Majesty the views which I detailed to you in my letter from Putbus [more accurately Stettin] and which I begged you not to disclose to the King until I had so done. A momentous decision was yesterday taken in the council; in the presence of the ministers I would not in any way oppose his Majesty; to-day I have done so; I have expressed my views, I have set forth my grave apprehensions as to the future. The King now knows that I am the determined foe of the ministry.

"FREDERICK WILLIAM."

The dispensation from attendance at the cabinet councils craved by the Crown Prince in his letter of June 30 now came up for discussion. The relations of the two royal persons, as they then still stood, appear from the following letter of von Bodelschwingh, dated September 11:

"I know of the sad occasion* of your journey, but know not at what hour to expect your return, or whether I may soon thereafter hope to have speech of you. I therefore inform you by writing, that, in consequence of the command of his Majesty conveyed to me through the aide-de-camp, I went about your business in the following way. I informed the aide-de-camp of the Crown Prince of your hasty departure and its occasion, and prayed him to notify the same to his Royal Highness in case your request of an audience should have been laid before him, or decision been already taken thereon. His

* The death of my mother-in-law. I was absent from Berlin from the 6th to the 11th.

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Majesty, so Prince Hohenlohe told me, has not seen fit to say a word to the Crown Prince either about your departure or the matter of the audience."

The King had decided that the Crown Prince should continue to attend the cabinet councils, as he had done since 1861, and had commissioned me to inform him of the fact. I suppose that the audience craved for this purpose was not had; for I remember that a mistake which the Crown Prince made—presenting himself in the council chamber on a day when the cabinet did not meet—served to introduce the necessary explanation. I asked him why he held so aloof from the government; in a few years he would be its master; and if his principles were not ours, he should rather endeavour to effect a gradual transition than throw himself into opposition. That suggestion he decisively rejected, apparently suspecting me of a desire to pave the way for my transfer into his service. The refusal was accompanied by a hostile expression of Olympian disdain, which after all these years I have not forgotten; to-day I still see before me the averted head, the flushed face, and the glance cast over the left shoulder. I suppressed my own rising choler, thought of Carlos and Alva (Act 2, sc. 5), and answered that my words had been prompted by an access of dynastic sentiment, in the hope of restoring him to closer relations with his father, in the interest alike of the country and the dynasty which the estrangement prejudiced; that in June I had done what I could to induce his father to decide nothing in wrath, because in the interest of the country and in view of the struggle with the parliament I wished to preserve harmony within the royal family. I said that I was a loyal servant of

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his father, and desired that on his accession to the throne he might find, to supply my place, servants as loyal to him as I had been to his father. I hoped he would dismiss the idea that I aimed at some day becoming his minister; that I would never be. His wrath fell as suddenly as it had risen, and he concluded the conversation in a friendly tone.

To the request to be relieved from further attendance at the cabinet councils he adhered firmly, and in the course of September addressed to the King another memorandum, inspired perhaps in some degree by foreign influence, in which he unfolded his reasons in a way which seemed like a sort of justification of his conduct in June. It occasioned a private correspondence between his Majesty and myself which concluded with the following brief note:

"Babelsberg: November 7, 1863.

"Herewith I send you my answer to my son the Crown Prince's memorandum of September. For your better guidance I return you the memorandum together with your notes, of which I made use in my answer."

I took no copy of the memorandum; its contents, however, can be gathered from my marginal notes, which are as follows:

P. 1. The claim that a caveat by his Royal Highness ought to outweigh the gravely and carefully considered decisions of the King, arrogates for his own, as compared with his royal father's position and experience, an undue importance. No one could suppose that his Royal Highness had any part in the ordinances, for everybody knows that the Crown Prince has no vote in

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the cabinet, and that the official position which former usage accorded to the heir apparent is now unconstitutional. The *démenti* at Dantzig was therefore superfluous.

P. 2. His Royal Highness's freedom of action is not impaired by his attending cabinet councils, listening and expressing his opinion, and thus keeping himself *au courant* with affairs of state, as it is the duty of every heir apparent to do. The discharge of this duty, if publicity be given to it in the newspapers, must produce in all quarters a good opinion of the conscientiousness with which the Crown Prince prepares himself for his high and serious vocation. The words "with hands tied" and so forth have no meaning.

P. 2. It is quite impossible that the country should identify his Royal Highness with the ministry, for the country knows that the Crown Prince is not summoned in order that he may concur officially in the decisions. Alas! the attitude of opposition to the Crown which his Royal Highness has assumed is known well enough in the country, and will be disapproved by every head of a household throughout its length and breadth, without distinction of party, as a revolt against that paternal authority which cannot be disregarded without doing violence to natural feeling and established usage. His Royal Highness could not be more gravely damaged in public esteem than by the publication of this memorandum.

P. 2. As it is not the vocation of the heir apparent to raise the standard of opposition against his royal father, the position of his Royal Highness is indeed false throughout. His "duty" is therefore to retire from

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it, which can only be done by reverting to a normal attitude.

P. 3. The conflict of duties does not arise, for the former duty is self-imposed; the care for the future of Prussia is a burden which lies, not on the Crown Prince, but on the King, and whether "mistakes" are made or not, and on what side, the future will make known. Where the "judgment" of his Majesty comes into collision with that of the Crown Prince, the former must always be decisive; so there is no conflict, his Royal Highness himself acknowledging that in our constitution there is "no room for opposition on the part of the heir apparent."

P. 4. The right of opposing in council does not exclude the duty of submission to his Majesty as soon as a resolution is come to. Ministers oppose whenever there is a divergence of view, but submit* to the decision of the King, though it fall to them to give effect to the policy they have combated.

P. 4. If his Royal Highness is aware that the action of ministers is sanctioned by the King he cannot conceal from himself that the opposition of the heir apparent is directed against the ruling monarch himself.

P. 5. A campaign against the will of the King is an enterprise which the Crown Prince is neither called upon to undertake nor justified in undertaking, precisely because he has no official status. Any Prince of the royal house whose views differed from the King's might, with as good a right as the Crown Prince, claim for himself the "duty" of going into open opposition against the

* Here in the margin are added in the King's own hand the words: "if they conscientiously can."

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King in order thereby to secure "his own and his children's" eventual succession against the consequences of alleged mistakes on the part of King's government, i.e. in order to safeguard the succession after the style of Louis Philippe, in the event of the King losing his throne by a revolution.

P. 5. It is for the Minister-President to give more precise account of his utterances at Gastein.

P. 7. It is not as "adviser" of the King, but for his own instruction and preparation for his future vocation, that the Crown Prince is summoned by his Majesty to attend cabinet councils.

P. 7. An attempt to "neutralise" the measures of the government would be open revolt and insurrection against the Crown.

P. 7. No open attack on the part of the democracy, no secret "gnawing" at the roots of the monarchy, is so dangerous as the relaxation of the bonds which still knit the people with the dynasty by the spectacle of an heir apparent in openly-declared opposition and discord in the bosom of the dynasty bruited abroad of set purpose. When the authority of the father and the King is assailed by the son and the heir apparent, to whom shall it still remain sacred? When for present revolt from the King a far-sighted ambition may safely anticipate a future reward, the relaxation of those bonds will redound to the future King's own disadvantage, and from the maimed authority of the present government will spring a yet more degenerate growth. Any government is better than one divided against itself and maimed, and the shocks which it is in the power of the present Crown Prince to

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occasion might shake the very foundations of the edifice in which he will himself in the future have to dwell.

P. 7. By the customary law of Prussia, which has not been materially altered by the constitution, the King rules, not his ministers. It is only legislative, not governmental, functions that are shared with the Chambers, before which the King is represented by the ministers. It is thus still the law, just as before the Constitution, that the ministers are his Majesty's servants and his chosen advisers, but not the rulers of the Prussian state. Even therefore by the Constitution the Prussian monarchy is not yet on a par with that of Belgium or England. Rather with us the King still rules personally, and his authority is limited in its exercise only by some other power, i.e. only within the legislative sphere.

P. 8. Publication of state secrets is an offence against the criminal law. What is to be treated as a state secret depends upon the regulations made by the King for the secrecy of the service.

P. 8. Why does the Crown Prince attach such importance to the appreciation of his position by "the country at large"? If his Royal Highness gives conscientious expression to his convictions in the council he does all that his conscience can require of him. He has no official position in state affairs, he is in no way called upon to give public expression to his views; no one who has even a superficial acquaintance with our administrative institutions will impute to his Royal Highness concurrence with the decisions of the government merely because he is without a vote, and therefore attends the proceedings of the council without power to make effective opposition.

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P. 8. "Do not appear better;" herein lies just the falseness of the position in that too much importance is attached to appearance; all really depends on *being* and *being able*, and these results are only to be gained by serious and sober work.

P. 9. The part taken by his Royal Highness in the councils is no "active" one, inasmuch as he gives no vote in divisions.

P. 9. To summon people and confer with them on affairs of state without authorisation by his Majesty would be an infringement of the criminal law. His Royal Highness's right to the free utterance of his opinions will certainly not be limited; on the contrary, its exercise is desired; but it does not extend beyond the council, where alone it can influence the decisions to be taken. The claim, on the other hand, to "lay everything frankly before the country" can only be prompted by a desire to gratify the sense of self-importance, and if conceded might easily have the effect of fomenting discontent and insubordination, and so prepare the way for the revolution.

P. 10. The presence of his Royal Highness at the cabinet councils will undoubtedly render the task of the ministry more difficult, and complicate the problems with which they have to deal. But can his Majesty absolve himself from the duty of securing for the Crown Prince by all possible human means a practical training in the public business and the laws of his country? Would it not be a perilous experiment to allow the future King to lose touch with affairs of state, though the weal of millions depends upon his conversance with them? In the memorandum before me his Royal Highness displays

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ignorance of the fact that the Crown Prince's participation in cabinet councils carries with it no responsibility, is only intended for his own instruction, and under no circumstances imposes the obligation of voting. Disregard of this circumstance is the basis of his entire reasoning. Were the Crown Prince conversant with affairs of state he would not have threatened the King with the publication of the proceedings of the council, i.e. with a breach of the law, not to say the criminal law, in the event of the King not falling in with his Royal Highness's wishes. And that only a few weeks after his Royal Highness himself had censured in severe terms the publication of his correspondence with his Majesty.

P. 11. The reproach here referred to is one which certainly touches every man in the nation very closely; no one imputes such a design to his Royal Highness, but the *on dit* certainly is that others who cherish such a design hope to accomplish it by means of the unconscious co-operation of the Crown Prince, and that the hatchers of nefarious plots to subvert the government by force have now a better prospect of success than formerly.

P. 12. The request for timely notice of the business to be discussed at the councils has always been recognised as reasonable, and will always be complied with; indeed, frequent expression has been given to the wish that his Royal Highness would permit himself to be kept more exactly *au courant* than was heretofore possible. That would mean that his Royal Highness's place of residence should always be known and always be within reach, that he himself should always be accessible to ministers, and that his discretion should be unimpeachable. Especially necessary, however, is it that the intermediary advisers,

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with whose aid alone his Royal Highness can be authorised to busy himself with the consideration of pending affairs of state, should be adherents, not of the opposition, but of the government, or at least impartial critics without intimate relations with the opposition in the Diet or the press. The question of discretion is that which presents most difficulty, especially in regard to our foreign relations, and must continue so to do until his Royal Highness and her Royal Highness the Crown Princess have fully realised that in ruling houses the nearest of kin may yet be aliens, and of necessity, and is in duty bound, represent other interests than the Prussian. It is hard that a frontier line should also be the line of demarcation between the interests of mother and daughter, of brother and sister; but to forget the fact is always perilous to the state.

P. 12. The "last cabinet council" (on the 3rd) was not a cabinet council. The ministers merely received a summons to an unexpected audience of his Majesty.

P. 13. To lay the memorandum before the ministry would give it an official character which deliverances on the part of heirs apparent have not in themselves.

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CHAPTER XVII.

THE FRANKFORT DIET OF PRINCES.

THE earliest attempts along the road by which alliance with Austria was eventually reached in 1879 were made while Count Rechberg was Minister-President and subsequently Minister for Foreign Affairs (May 17, 1859, to October 27, 1864). Since the personal relations in which I stood to him in the Federal Diet might have helped to further such attempts, and at one moment certainly did further them, I insert here two experiences which I had with him at Frankfort.

After a sitting in which I had annoyed Rechberg he stayed behind with me in the Chamber, and vehemently reproached me for my incompatibility: I was *mauvais coucheur,* a picker of quarrels; referring to cases in which I had defended myself against encroachments of the Chair. I replied that I did not know if his anger was merely a diplomatic move or if it were meant seriously; but that his manner of expressing it was of a highly personal nature. "We cannot," I said, "despatch the diplomatic business of our states with pistols in the Bockheim wood." Thereupon he replied with great violence: "Let us drive there at once; I am ready to start this minute." With that I considered we had forsaken diplomatic ground. I answered without violence: "Why should we drive? There is space enough in the palace garden here; Prus-

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sian officers live over the way, and there are Austrian officers in the neighbourhood. The whole affair can be settled in a quarter of an hour. I must ask you to allow me to write a few lines concerning the origin of the quarrel, and I expect you to sign the note with me, that my King may not deem me a bully whom the diplomatic business of his master leads to a duel."

While I was writing, my colleague walked up and down behind me with hasty strides. During that time his anger evaporated, and he regarded more calmly the situation that he had brought about. I left him with the words that I would send Herr von Oertzen, the Mecklenburg ambassador, to him, as my second to negotiate further. Through Oertzen's mediation the quarrel was made up.

It is interesting too to mention how I afterwards gained the confidence of this irascible though honourable man, and perhaps, when we had both become ministers, his friendship. During a business visit which I paid him, he left the room to make some change in his dress; he put into my hands a despatch which he had just received from his government and asked me to read it. I convinced myself from the contents that Rechberg had made a mistake, and had given me a document that certainly related to the matter in question, but which was intended for his eyes alone; it had obviously been accompanied by a second document which was to be shown. When he returned I gave him back the despatch with the remark that he had made a mistake and that I would forget what I had read; as a matter of fact I preserved an absolute silence in regard to his blunder, and neither in despatches nor in conversation did I make even an in-

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direct use of the secret document or of his slip. Thenceforth he placed in me every confidence.

The attempts made at the time of Rechberg's ministry would, if successful, have led to a union of all the German powers on the basis of a dual government, to an empire of seventy millions in Central Europe with a twofold apex. Schwarzenberg's policy pointed somewhat the same way, but there was to be only a single apex—Austria; while Prussia would probably have been reduced to the rank of a middle state. The congress of princes in 1863 was the last attempt at this. If the Schwarzenberg policy in the posthumous form of the congress had ultimately succeeded, the employment of the Federal Diet for the purpose of repression would then, so far as the internal policy of Germany was concerned, presumably have come to the front upon the lines of the constitutional revisions which the *Bund* had already started upon in Hanover, Hesse, Luxemburg, Lippe, Hamburg, and other places. By the same analogy the Prussian constitution might have been hauled over the coals, if the King had not laid his plans too well.

Under a dualistic apex, with Prussia and Austria equal in authority, a consummation that worked out as a result of my closer relations with Rechberg might have been attained; our internal constitutional development would not necessarily have been threatened with extinction in the slough of federal reaction, or by the one-sided furtherance of the absolutist aims of individual states; the jealousy of the two great states would have been the safeguard of the constitutions. Prussia, Austria, and the middle states would, under the system of the dual apex, have clearly been left to compete for the

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favour of suffrages in the whole nation, as well as in individual states, and the friction thence arising would have preserved our public life from such benumbing as followed the days of the Mainz commission of inquiry. The period of activity of the Austrian Liberal press in rivalry with Prussia, although only in the sphere of phrases, made it perfectly clear, even at the beginning of the 'fifties, that the undecided struggle for hegemony had its uses in quickening our national feelings, and in furthering our constitutional development.

But the reform in the *Bund* that Austria endeavoured to obtain with the aid of the "Diet of Princes" in 1863 would have left little room for rivalry between Prussia, Austria, and parliamentarism. The pre-eminence of Austria in the then purposed reforms would have been secured, on the basis of the apprehension of Prussia and of parliamentary conflicts felt by the ruling houses, by means of a permanent and systematically founded majority in the Diet.

The consideration in which Germany was held abroad depended, under both forms of government, the dual, and that of Austria alone, on the degree in which both the one and the other preserved a firm unity in the nation as a whole. The developments of Danish affairs proved that directly Austria and Prussia were united, they represented a power in Europe that none of the other nations would be likely to attack with a light heart. So long as Prussia, even though she might be supported by the strongest expression of public opinion on the part of the German people, the middle states included, had the matter in hand alone, she made no progress, and only led the way to conclusions like the armistice of

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Malmö and the convention of Olmütz. As soon as Austria, under Rechberg, was successfully won over to act in unison with Prussia, the weight of the two German states was sufficient to prevent any desires of interference on the part of the other Powers. In the course of her more recent history, England has always felt the need of allying herself with one of the military Powers of the Continent, and has sought to satisfy that need, from the point of view of English interests at the moment, sometimes at Berlin and sometimes at Vienna. A sudden transition from one point of support to the other, as happened in the Seven Years' war, has not seemed to her a reason for cherishing any nice scruples against the charge of leaving old friends in the lurch. But when the two Courts were united and allied; English policy did not find it too advantageous to take up a hostile attitude towards them, in alliance, it might be, with one of the Powers most dangerous to her—France and Russia. The moment, however, there had been a split in the Austro-Prussian alliance, the interference in the Danish question of the European elders in convention assembled, led by England, would have followed. If, therefore, our policy was not again to leave the track, insistence on an understanding with Vienna was of the utmost importance; therein lay our protection from Anglo-European interference.

On December 4, 1862, I had openly shown my hand to Count Karolyi, with whom I was on confidential terms. I said to him:

"Our relations must become either better or worse than they now are. I am prepared for a joint attempt to improve them. If it fails through your refusal, do

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not reckon on our allowing ourselves to be bound by the friendly phrases of the Diet. You will have to deal with us as one of the Great Powers of Europe; the paragraphs in the Vienna decrees have no power to hinder the progress of German history."[1]

Count Karolyi, a man of honourable and independent character, doubtless reported exactly what we had said confidentially when alone. But since the Olmütz and Dresden time, and the period of Schwarzenberg's predominance, an erroneous opinion had obtained at Vienna; it had become customary to consider us weaker, and especially more timid, than we are apt to be, as well as to rate in the long run too highly the importance of royal kinship and personal regard in questions of international politics.

The older military presumptions at anyrate went to show that if the war of 1866 had been entered on in 1850, our prospects would have been hazardous. But to count on our timidity as late as the 'sixties was an error which left out of the reckoning the change in the occupant of the throne.

Frederick William IV. would have determined upon mobilisation as easily as in 1850, or as his successor in 1859, but scarcely upon actual warfare. In his reign there was always the danger that tergiversations similar to those under Haugwitz in 1805 might have led us into a false position; even after an actual breach, people in Austria would have stepped over all our muddling attempts after mediation, and passed with decision to the

[1] Cf. the despatch of January 24, 1863, in which Bismarck gives an account of his interviews with Karolyi on December 4 and 13 1862, *State Archives*, VIII. p. 55 ff. No. 1751.

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order of the day. Disinclination to break with the paternal traditions and with old-standing family relations was as strong with King William as with his brother; but so soon as, under the guidance of his honour, whose sensitiveness lay as much in his German sword-belt as in his consciousness of being a monarch, he felt compelled to decisions which weighed heavily on his heart, you felt certain that if you stuck to him in no danger would he leave you in the lurch. Vienna made too little account of this change in the supreme direction, and too much of the influence which had formerly been customarily exercised on the Berlin decisions by what was called public opinion as generated by press agents and subsidies, and would further be exercised through the interposition of royal relatives and of correspondents of the royal family.

Vienna likewise overrated such weakening effect as our domestic conflicts might have had on our foreign policy and our military capabilities. Manifold symptoms, from Blind's attempt at assassination and the criticism of it in progressive journals* to the public manifestoes of great corporate communities and to the result of the elections, testify that the disinclination to cut the Gordian knot of German politics with the sword was equally strong and widespread in 1866. But these currents of feeling did not get into our regiments and their efficiency in action; and on the battle-field lay the final decision. Even the symptomatic fact that diplomatic notes in con-

* In the Berlin picture-shops hung a lithograph in which the *attentat* was represented with the devil catching bullets destined for me with the words: "He belongs to me!" Cf. *Political Speeches*, x. 123 (Speech of May 9, 1884).

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nexion with the Court were, through the intervention of von Schleinitz, once Foreign Minister, and at that period Minister of the Household, going to and fro at Berlin while the first actions were being fought in Bohemia, had not the slightest influence on the military side in the management of the war.

If the Austrian cabinet had not erroneously estimated facts, and had taken at its right value the confidential overture made by me to Count Karolyi in 1862; if it had modified its policy in the direction of seeking an understanding with Prussia instead of trying to coerce her by means of majorities and other influences, we should probably have seen, or at anyrate made trial of, a period of dualistic policy in Germany. It is certainly very doubtful if, without the clearing effect of the experiences of 1866 and 1870, such a system could have developed peacefully in a sense acceptable to German national sentiment, and with permanent avoidance of internal dissensions. The belief in the military superiority of Austria was too strong, both at Vienna and at the Courts of the middle states, for a *modus vivendi* on the footing of equality with Prussia. The proof that this was the case at Vienna lay in the proclamations that were found in the knapsacks of the Austrian soldiers, together with the new uniforms ordered for the entry into Berlin. The contents of those documents betrayed the certainty with which the Austrians had counted on a victorious occupation of the Prussian provinces. The refusal to entertain the latest Prussian proposals for peace, made through the brother of General von Gablenz, and the reason of it, namely, the finance minister's requirement of a contribution from Prussia, as well as the

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readiness announced at that time to treat after the first battle, demonstrates the certainty with which a victory in this was reckoned on.

The joint result of these representations working in a similar direction was the opposite of any advance on the part of the Vienna cabinet towards a desire for the dual rule; Austria passed to the order of the day over the head of Prussia's proposal in 1862, and with the diametrically opposite course of initiating the convocation of the Frankfort "Diet of Princes," by which King William and his cabinet were surprised at Gastein at the beginning of August.

According to Fröbel,[1] who regards himself as the originator of the congress of princes, and who doubtless was initiated in the preliminaries, the rest of the German princes were not aware of the Austrian scheme until they received the invitation dated July 31. It is, however, likely that von Varnbüler, who was subsequently Würtemberg minister, had been in some degree admitted to the secret. In the summer of 1863 that able and hard-working politician showed an inclination to renew the relations that had formerly existed between us through the intervention of our common friend, von Below of Hohendorf. He engaged me to meet him on July 12, and at his desire the interview took place secretly at a little place in Bohemia west of Karlsbad. The only impression I retained of the interview was that he wished rather to sound me than to offer suggestions on the German question. The economic financial questions on which he in

[1] *Julius Fröbel: ein Lebenslauf.* Stuttgart, 1891. Part II. pp. 252, 255.

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1878 gave me the valuable assistance of his special knowledge, and of his powers of work, were already occupying a foremost place in his ideas, and he especially leaned to a Great-German policy with a corresponding customs union.

At Gastein, on August 2, 1863, I was sitting under the fir-trees in the Schwarzenberg gardens by the deep gorge of the Ache. Above me was a nest of titmice, and watch in hand I counted the number of times in the minute the bird brought her nestlings a caterpillar or other insect. While I was observing the useful activity of these little creatures, I saw King William sitting alone on a bench on the Schillerplatz on the opposite side of the gorge. When the hour drew near to dress for dinner with the King, I went to my lodgings and there found a note from his Majesty informing me that he would await me on the Schillerplatz in order to speak to me about the meeting with the Emperor. I made all possible haste, but before I reached the King's apartments an interview had taken place between the two Sovereigns. If I had spent less time over my observations of nature, and had seen the King sooner, the first impression made on him by the Emperor's communications might have been other than it was.

He did not instantly feel the slight implied by this sudden attack, by this invitation, we might almost say by this summons *à courte échéance*. He probably favoured the Austrian proposal because it contained an element of royal solidarity in the struggle against parliamentary Liberalism, by which he himself was just then hard pressed at Berlin. Queen Elizabeth, whom we met at Wildbad on our journey from Gastein to Baden, was

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urgent with me to go to Frankfort. I replied: "If the King does not otherwise decide I will go and perform his business there, but I will not return as minister to Berlin." The prospect seemed to disturb the Queen, and she ceased to contest my views with the King.

Had I dropped my resistance to the King's efforts to go to Frankfort, and according to his wish, accompanied him thither in order, during the congress, to convert the rivalry of Austria and Prussia into a common warfare against revolution and constitutionalism, Prussia would have remained outwardly what she was before; under the presidency of Austria she would, no doubt, by means of federal decisions have been able to get her Constitution revised in the same way as happened with those of Hanover, Hesse, and Mecklenburg, and at Lippe, Hamburg, and Luxemburg, but would thereby have closed the road to German nationality.

It was not an easy task to decide the King to stay away from Frankfort. I exerted myself for that purpose during our drive from Wildbad to Baden, when, on account of the servants on the box, we discussed the German question in the small open carriage in French. By the time we reached Baden I thought I had convinced my master. But there we found the King of Saxony, who was commissioned by all the princes to renew the invitation to Frankfort (August 19). My master did not find it easy to resist that move. He reflected over and over again: "Thirty reigning princes and a King to take their messages!" Besides, he loved and honoured the King of Saxony, who moreover of all the princes had personally most vocation for such a mission. Not until midnight did I succeed in obtaining the King's signature

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to a refusal to the King of Saxony. When I left my master, both he and I were ill and exhausted by the nervous tension of the situation; and my subsequent verbal communication with the Saxon minister, von Beust, bore the stamp of this agitation.[1] But the crisis was overcome, and the King of Saxony departed without, as I had feared, visiting my master again.

On the return journey from Baden-Baden to Berlin (August 31) the King passed so near Frankfort that his decision not to take part in the congress became known to everyone. The majority, or at least the most powerful, of the princes felt very uncomfortable at this when they thought of the scheme of reform which, if Prussia held aloof, left them standing alone with Austria in a connexion where they got no protection from the rivalry of the two Great Powers. The Vienna cabinet must have thought of the possibility that the other Federal princes would agree in the congress to the proposals made on August 17, even when they had finally been left alone with Austria in the reformed federal relation. Otherwise it would not have been demanded of the princes who remained at Frankfort that they should accept the Austrian proposals and carry them into practice without the consent of Prussia. But at Frankfort the middle states did not desire either a solely Prussian or a solely Austrian leadership; they wanted to hold as influential a position as possible as arbiters in the sense of the Triad, by which each of the two Great Powers would be driven to compete for the votes of the middle states. To the demand of Austria that they should conclude without

[1] Cf. Beust, "*Aus drei Vierteljahrhunderten*," I. 332, 333; v. Sybel, II. 532.

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Prussia they replied by referring to the necessity of fresh negotiations with Prussia and by announcing their own inclination to such a course. The form of their reply to the wishes of Austria was not smooth enough not to excite some irritation at Vienna. The effect on Count Rechberg, prepared by the friendly relations in which our acting as colleagues at Frankfort had ended, was to make him say that the road to Berlin was not longer or more difficult for Austria than for the middle states.

The ill-temper engendered by the refusal was, according to my impressions, chiefly responsible for the impulse which led the Viennese cabinet to make an agreement with Prussia inconsistent with the Federal Constitution. This new turn of affairs suited Austrian interests, even if it should last for some while. To this end it was most requisite that Rechberg should remain at the oar. If by that means a dual leadership of the German federation was restored, which the other states would not have refused so soon as they were convinced that the understanding was honourable and likely to last, then in face of the Austro-Prussian understanding the edge would have been taken off the desire on the part of individual South German ministers for a Rhenish federation—a desire that, whatever Count Beust may say in his Memoirs, was most clearly expressed at Darmstadt.

A few months after the Frankfort congress, King Frederick VII. of Denmark died (November 15, 1863). The failure of the Austrian advance, and the refusal of the other Federal states to enter into closer relations with Austria, alone caused the idea of a dual policy of the German Powers to be closely deliberated at Vienna,

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in consequence of the opening of the Schleswig-Holstein question and succession, and with more prospect of realisation than there had been in December 1862. Count Rechberg, in his annoyance at the refusal of the members of the federation to pledge themselves without the co-operation of Prussia, simply faced about, with the remark that an understanding with Prussia was easier for Austria than for the middle states. [1]

In this he was right for the moment, but, for a permanence, only if Austria was prepared actually to treat Prussia as holding equal right in Germany, and to reward Prussia's support of Austria's European interests in Italy and the east, by permitting the free exercise of Prussian influence, at least in North Germany. The beginning of the dual policy gave her a splendid opportunity for action in the joint battles on the Schlei, in the joint invasion of Jutland, and the joint treaty of peace with Denmark. The Austro-Prussian alliance maintained itself even under the weakening effect of the ill-temper of the other Federal states, in sufficient preponderance to keep in check all the counter-efforts of ill-temper on the part of the other Great Powers, under whose protection Denmark had thrown down the glove to united Germany.

Our closer connexion with Austria was first endangered by the violent pressure of military influences on the King, urging him to cross the frontier of Jutland even without Austria. My old friend Field-Marshal Wrangel sent the King telegrams, not in cipher, containing the coarsest insults against me, in which remarks were made, referring to me, about diplomatists fit for the

[1] Cf. Beust, *op. cit.* I. 336.

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gallows.* I succeeded, however, at that time in inducing the King not to move a hair's-breadth in advance of Austria, especially not to give the impression at Vienna that Austria was being dragged along by us against her will. My friendly relations with Rechberg and Karolyi enabled me to restore the understanding about the invasion of Jutland.

In spite of this success, the attempt at dualism reached its culminating point, and began to decline, at an interview which took place between the two monarchs attended by their ministers, Rechberg and myself, at Schönbrunn on August 22, 1864. In the course of the conversation I said to the Emperor of Austria:

"Destined by our history for one political community, we should both do better business if we held together and accepted the leadership of Germany, which we shall not lose, when once we are united. If Prussia and Austria take upon themselves the task of furthering not only the interests common to both, but also each the interests of the other, the effects of the alliance of the two great German Powers will be far-reaching in its operation, both in Germany and in Europe. To Austria, as a state, it matters little what form is given to the Danish duchies, but a great deal what her relations are with Prussia. Does

* In consequence of this episode, we were personally estranged for many years. We did not speak when we met at Court, until on one of the many occasions when we were neighbours at table, the Field-Marshal said, smiling in a shamefaced way: "My son, can you not forget?" "How can I possibly forget what I have gone through?" I replied. After a long pause he returned: "Can you not even forgive?" "With my whole heart," I answered. We shook hands and were friends again as in the old days.

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not this undoubted fact prove the convenience of a policy benevolent to Prussia, consolidating the alliance existing between the German Powers, and awakening in Prussia gratitude towards Austria? If our joint acquisition was situated in Italy instead of in Holstein, if the war which we have conducted had placed Lombardy at the disposal of the two Powers instead of Schleswig-Holstein, it would not have occurred to me to induce my King to oppose any resistance to any wishes of our ally, or to claim an equivalent, had there not been at the time an equivalent to be disposed of. But to cede to him an old Prussian province for Schleswig-Holstein would scarcely be possible, even if the inhabitants wished it; at Glatz, however, even the Austrians settled there had protested against it. I felt that the profitable results of the friendship between the great German Powers were not ended with the Holstein question, and that, although now situated at the very farthest distance from the domain of Austrian interests, they might on another occasion be much nearer, and that it would be useful for Austria to act generously and obligingly towards Prussia now."

It seemed to me that the prospect I had sketched was not without effect on the Emperor Francis Joseph. He spoke indeed of the difficulty in regard to public opinion in Austria if the present situation ended without an equivalent, if Prussia made so large a gain as Schleswig-Holstein. He ended, however, with the question whether we were actually determined to demand and incorporate that possession. My impression was that, if he should be assured of a firm connexion with Prussia in future, and of the support of analogous desires on the part of Austria by Prussia, he did not consider it

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impossible to yield to us his pretensions to the territory resigned by Denmark. He proposed in the first place for further discussion the question whether Prussia really was firmly determined to make the duchies Prussian provinces, or whether we should be content with certain rights in them such as were formulated afterwards in the so-called February conditions. The King did not answer; I broke the silence by replying to the Emperor: "I am exceedingly glad that your Majesty has submitted the question to me in the presence of my gracious master; I hope to have the opportunity of learning his views." So far I had, in fact, received no plain statement from the King, either verbally or in writing, about his Majesty's final pleasure respecting the duchies.

The *mise en demeure* by the Emperor resulted in the King saying, with some hesitation and embarrassment, he had no right to the duchies and could therefore make no claim to them. By this utterance, in which I plainly perceived the influence of the King's relatives and of the Court Liberal party, I was, so far as the Emperor was concerned, put *hors de combat.* I at once took up the cause of the preservation of the union between the two great German Powers, and a short paper adequate for that purpose, in which the future of Schleswig-Holstein remained undecided, was drawn up by Rechberg and myself, and sanctioned by the two Sovereigns.

My idea of dualism was that it would have resembled the circumstances that at present exist, with the difference, however, that Austria would have kept federal influence over the states which, with Prussia, now form the German Empire. Rechberg was won over to the strengthening of the preponderance of Central Europe by

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means of such an understanding between the two states. This arrangement, compared with what had gone before, and in regard to the circumstances at the time, would at all events have been a step forward toward better things, but would have promised to be permanent only so long as confidence in the leading persons on both sides remained undisturbed. When I left Vienna on August 26, 1864, Count Rechberg told me that his position had been attacked; through the discussions of the ministry and the Emperor's attitude towards them, he could not but fear that his colleagues, especially Schmerling, intended to drop him overboard if he did not at least give the assurance that he would within a definite time enter on negotiations concerning a customs-union, a matter with which the Emperor was principally occupied. I had no scruples against such a *pactum de contrahendo* because I was convinced that it would be unable to haggle me into any concessions that went beyond the bounds of what seemed to me possible, and because the political side of the question stood in the forefront. I regarded a customs-union as an impracticable Utopia on account of the differences in the economic and administrative conditions of both parties. The commodities which formed the financial basis of the customs-union in the north do not come into use at all in the greater part of Austro-Hungarian territory. The difficulties which the differences in habits of life and in consumption between North and South Germany, brought about even now within the *Zollverein*, would be insurmountable, if both districts were to be included in the same customs-boundary with the eastern provinces of Austria-Hungary. A fairer scale of distribution, or one

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more corresponding with the existing consumption of dutiable goods, could not be arrived at; every scale would be either unfair to the *Zollverein,* or unacceptable to public opinion in Austria-Hungary. There is no common measure of taxation for the Slovack or Galician with his few wants on the one side, and on the other for the inhabitant of the Rhenish provinces and of Lower Saxony. Besides, I did not believe in the trustworthiness of the service on a great part of the Austrian frontier.

Convinced of the impossibility of a customs-union, I had no hesitation in doing Count Rechberg the desired service in order to keep him in his post. When I set out for Biarritz on October 5, I felt quite secure that the King would stand by my vote; and even to this day I am not clear as to the motives that induced my colleagues—Charles von Bodelschwingh, the Minister of Finance, and Count Itzenplitz, the Minister of Commerce, and their free-trading *spiritus rector* Delbrück—to work on the King during my absence with such determination about a matter somewhat out of his province, so that through our refusal Rechberg's position was, as he had anticipated, shaken, and he was replaced as Foreign Minister by Mensdorff, who was in the first place Schmerling's candidate, until he was himself driven out of office by reactionary and Catholic influences. The King, firm as he was in domestic politics, allowed himself in that case to be influenced by the doctrine advocated by his wife—that popularity was the means of solving the German question.

Herr von Thile wrote to me to Biarritz about a conference of members of the Foreign Office, and of the

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Ministry of Commerce, which was held on October 10, 1864:

"I found confirmed afresh in to-day's conference what indeed has been long known, that experts, with all their special delicacy, which I gladly recognise, in their handling of the professional side, sadly disregard the political side, and, for instance, treat the possibility of a change of ministers at Vienna as a trifle. Itzenplitz vacillates in his views very much. I repeatedly succeeded in making him confess that Article 25, *finaliter et realiter,* pledges to nothing. But each time a reproving look from Delbrück frightened him back to his specialist position."

Two days later, on October 12, Abeken, who was with the King at Baden-Baden, informed me that he had not succeeded in gaining the King over to Article 25; his Majesty shrank from the "shrieks" that would be raised over such a concession to Austria, and said among other things: "We should perhaps prevent a ministerial crisis at Vienna, but should create one at Berlin; if we conceded Article 25, Bodelschwingh and Delbrück would probably resign."

And again, two days later, Count Goltz wrote to me from Paris:

"If Rechberg's position is decidedly shaken (that it is so with the Emperor I decidedly doubt), the necessity will arise for us to anticipate here the beginnings of a purely Schmerling ministry."

Not without significance for the value of the dualist policy was the question upon what measure of steadfastness in maintaining this line of policy we could reckon

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on the part of Austria. When we recalled the suddenness with which Rechberg, in his irritation, broke with the middle states when they would not follow him, and allied himself with us without them and against them, the possibility could not be disregarded that non-agreement with Prussia in single questions might lead us unexpectedly to a new evolution. I have never had to complain of any lack of uprightness on Count Rechberg's part, but he was, as Hamlet says, "splenetic and rash" to an unusual degree; and if the personal irritation of Count Buol about the unfriendly demeanour of the Emperor Nicholas, rather than about political differences, had sufficed to keep Austrian policy firmly and permanently on the lines of the well-known ingratitude of Schwarzenberg (*'nous étonnerons l'Europe par notre ingratitude"*), no one could shut his eyes to the possibility that the far weaker cement between Count Rechberg and myself might be washed away by any sort of tidal wave. The Emperor Nicholas had a much stronger foundation for a belief in the trustworthiness of his relations with Austria than we had at the time of the Danish war. He had done the Emperor Francis Joseph a service such as scarcely any monarch had ever done a neighbouring state, and the advantages of mutual reliance in the monarchical interest against revolution, of the Italians and Hungarians as well as of the Poles of 1846, made the alliance with Russia weigh heavier in the scale for Austria than the alliance with Prussia possible in 1864. The Emperor Francis Joseph has an honourable nature, but the Austro-Hungarian ship of state is of so peculiar a construction that its oscillations, to which the monarch must adapt his attitude on board, can hardly be reckoned

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on in advance. The centrifugal influences of individual nationalities, the interlacing of the vital interests which Austria has simultaneously to represent towards Germany, Italy, the East, and Poland, the ungovernableness of the Hungarian national spirit, and, above all, the incalculable way in which confessional influences cross political decisions, lay on every ally of Austria the duty of being prudent, and of not making the interests of its own subjects entirely dependent on Austrian policy. The reputation for stability which the latter had won under the long rule of Metternich is not tenable according to the composition of the Hapsburg monarchy, and, according to its internal motive forces, not in agreement at all with the policy of the Vienna cabinet before the Metternich period, and not entirely with that which followed it. If, however, the reaction of changing events and situations on the decisions of the Vienna cabinet is not permanently calculable, it is certainly open to every ally of Austria not to refrain absolutely from cultivating relations out of which other combinations may, in case of necessity, be developed.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

LEWIS II., KING OF BAVARIA.

On our way from Gastein to Baden-Baden we visited Munich. King Max had already started for Frankfort, having deputed his wife to receive the guests. I do not think that Queen Mary, with her retiring disposition and her scanty interest in politics, had any very active influence on King William or on the decisions of which he was then full. At the regular meals which we took during our stay at Nymphenburg on August 16 and 17 the Crown Prince, afterwards Lewis II., sat opposite his mother, and next to me. It seemed to me that his thoughts were far away from the table, and only now and again did he remember his intention to talk to me; our conversation did not go beyond the ordinary Court subjects. But even so I thought I recognised in his remarks a talent, a vivacity, and a good sense realised in his future career. In the pauses of the conversation he looked past his mother to the ceiling, now and again hastily emptying his champagne glass, the filling of which was, as it seemed to me by his mother's directions, somewhat slowly performed; thus it happened that the Prince very often held his glass over his shoulder, behind him, where it was hesitatingly refilled. Neither then nor later did he overstep the bounds of moderation in drinking, but I had the feeling

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that his surroundings bored him, and that the champagne aided the play of his independent fancy. He made a sympathetic impression on me, although I must confess, with some vexation, that my efforts towards a pleasant conversation with him at table were unsuccessful. That was the only time I met King Lewis face to face, but from his accession soon after (March 10, 1864) I remained in friendly relations with him, and in a comparatively brisk correspondence, that lasted until his death, he always impressed me as a businesslike, clear-headed ruler, full of the German national spirit, but caring greatly for the preservation of the federal principle of the Constitution of the Empire, and of the constitutional privileges of his country. I remember, as something outside the domain of practical politics, his uppermost thought in the Versailles negotiations, that the German Empire, with the federal presidency, should alternate between the Prussian and Bavarian houses. The doubts as to how that unpractical idea was to be made practical were put an end to by the negotiations with the Bavarian representatives at Versailles, and by the result of them, according to which the rights which he exercises to-day were conceded in principle to the president of the federation, and thus to the King of Prussia, before the title of Emperor was discussed.

I insert here some examples of my correspondence with King Lewis, which display the real characteristics of the unfortunate prince, and possess also in themselves an intrinsic interest. The technical forms of address are only given in the first letters.

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From Prince Bismarck to King Lewis.

"Versailles: November 27, 1870.[1]

"Most serene and mighty King, most gracious Lord, —For the gracious overtures which, by command of your Majesty, Count Holnstein has made to me, I hereby tender my most respectful thanks. My feeling of gratitude towards your Majesty rests on a foundation deeper and broader than the personal one in the official position in which I am called on to rate at their true value your Majesty's high-spirited resolutions, by which your Majesty, both at the beginning and in the finishing of this war, has given the deciding touch to the unity and power of Germany. It is not, however, my duty, but that of the German people and of history, to thank the Serene Bavarian House for your Majesty's patriotic policy and for the heroism of your army. I can only assure you that so long as I live I shall be your Majesty's attached and devoted servant in all honourable gratitude, and shall esteem myself at all times fortunate if it is granted me to be of service to your Majesty. In the question of the German Emperor I have ventured to place before Count Holnstein a short paper on the German question, founded on the train of ideas that, according to my feelings, are stirring the German stocks. The German Emperor is the compatriot of all of them; the King of Prussia is a neighbour, to whom, under that name, rights do not appertain which have their basis only in voluntary assignment by German princes and stocks. I believe that the German title for the presidency makes the concession of it easier, and

[1] After the rough draft, which seems to have received some additions in the fair copy.

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history teaches that the great princely houses of Germany never regarded the existence of the Emperor elected by them as derogatory to their position in Europe.

"V. BISMARCK."

From King Lewis to Prince Bismarck.

"Hohenschwangau: December 2, 1870.

"My dear Count,—I note with the liveliest pleasure that, notwithstanding urgent and manifold business, you have found leisure to express your feelings towards me.

"I tender you my most cordial thanks therefore; for I attach a high value to the devoted feelings of a man towards whom the gaze of the whole of Germany is directed with joyful pride.

"My letter to your King, my loved and honoured uncle, will reach his hands to-morrow.

"I wish, with my whole heart, that the proposal I have set before the King may meet with the fullest response from the other members of the federation to whom I have written, as well as of the nation. It is satisfactory to me to be conscious that at the beginning of this glorious war, as at the conclusion, I was, in virtue of my rank in Germany, in the position to make a decisive step in favour of the national cause. But I hope, and hope with assurance, that Bavaria will in the future preserve her position, for it is surely consistent with a loyal unreserved federal policy, and will be most safe to obviate a pernicious centralisation.

"Great, undying is that which you have done for the German nation, and, without flattery, I may say that

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you hold the most eminent place among the great men of our century.

"May God grant you many many years, that you may continue to work for the weal and prosperity of our common Fatherland. With my best salutations, I remain, my dear Count, always

"Your sincere friend,

"LEWIS."

From Prince Bismarck to King Lewis.

"Versailles: December 24, 1870.[1]

"Most serene King, most gracious Lord,—Your Majesty's gracious letter, which Count Holnstein delivered to me, emboldens me to offer to your Majesty my thanks for its gracious contents, and my dutiful good wishes for the approaching new year. Seldom, indeed, has Germany awaited from any new year the fulfilment of national aspirations with the same confidence as from the year that lies before us. If these hopes are realised, if United Germany attains by her own forces to the power of guaranteeing her peace abroad within well-secured frontiers, without at the same time prejudicing the free development of individual members of the federation, then the deciding position which your Majesty has gained at the new shaping of our common Fatherland will remain to all time unforgotten in the history and in the gratitude of the Germans.

"Your Majesty rightly presumes that I expect no salvation from centralisation, but I perceive in that very

[1] After the rough draft, some changes in style were made in the fair copy.

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maintenance of rights which the federal constitution secures to individual members of the federation the form of development best suited to the German spirit, and, at the same time, the surest guarantee against the dangers to which law and order might be exposed in the free movement of the political life of to-day. The hostile position taken up by the Republican party throughout Germany in regard to the re-establishment, through the initiative of your Majesty and the Federal princes, of the imperial dignity, proves that it is conducive to Conservative and Monarchical interests.

"Your Majesty may rest assured that I shall esteem myself happy if I succeed in preserving your Majesty's good opinion. v. B."

From King Lewis to Prince Bismarck.

"Hohenschwangau: July 31, 1874.

"My dear Prince,—It would not only be of the greatest interest to me, but it would also afford me the liveliest pleasure to speak with you and give verbal expression to the very high esteem I feel for you. To my sincere grief I learn that the horrifying attempt at assassination,[1] for the failure of which I shall ever be thankful to God, has had a bad effect on your health, so precious to me, and upon the course of your cure.

"It would therefore be presumptuous on my part were I to ask you at once to take the trouble to come to me, now that I am staying in the mountains. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your last letter, which filled me with sincere pleasure. I place my firm

[1] Kullmann's on July 13, 1874.

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trust in you, and believe, as you expressed yourself to my minister von Pfretschner, that you will stake your political influence on making the federal principle form the basis of the new order of things in Germany. May Heaven preserve your precious life to us for many years! Your death, as well as that of my honoured Emperor, would be a real misfortune for Germany and for Bavaria. With my most heartfelt salutations, with particular esteem, and deep-seated confidence, I remain always

"Your sincere friend,

"LEWIS."

From Prince Bismarck to King Lewis.

"Kissingen: August 10, 1874.

"Most serene King, most gracious Lord,—On the point of finishing my cure, I cannot leave Kissingen without once more respectfully thanking your Majesty for all the kindness which you have shown me here, and particularly for your gracious letter of the 31st ult.

"I am most fortunate in the confidence therein expressed in me by your Majesty, and I shall strive always to deserve it. But apart from personal guarantees your Majesty may securely reckon on those comprised in the very constitution of the Empire. That constitution rests on the federal basis accorded in the treatises of federation and cannot be violated without breach of treaty. Therein the constitution of the Empire differs from every national constitution. Your Majesty's rights form an indissoluble part of the constitution of the Empire, and rest on the same secure basis of law as all the institutions of the Empire. Germany, in the institution of its Federal

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Council, and Bavaria, in its dignified and intelligent representation on that council, have a firm guarantee against any deterioration or exaggeration of efforts in the direction of unity. Your Majesty will be able to place the fullest confidence in the security of the treaty-guarded law of the constitution, even when I no longer have the honour of serving the Empire as chancellor. With deep respect, I remain

"Your Majesty's faithful servant,

"v. BISMARCK."

"Friedrichsruh: June 2, 1876.

"Baron Werther informs me of your Majesty's kindness in placing at my disposal, for my visit to Kissingen, horses and carriages from the royal stables. I hope I shall be able to follow my physician's advice and to seek again this summer the cure which, as your Majesty has done me the honour to remember in your order of April 29, I found so beneficial two years ago.

"Turkish affairs look menacing and may entail pressing diplomatic work; but among the European Powers, Germany will permanently, or at all events longer than the others, remain in the most favourable position for keeping aloof from the complications with which an Eastern question may threaten the peace. Therefore I do not give up the hope that I shall be able in a few weeks to go to Kissingen, and respectfully beg your Majesty to accept my heartfelt thanks for your gracious provisions for my comfort.

"v. BISMARCK."

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From King Lewis to Prince Bismarck.

"Berg: June 18, 1876.

"I am sincerely delighted to learn that the hope of visiting Kissingen expressed in your letter of the 2nd inst. is now fulfilled.

"I heartily welcome you to my country, and am happily confident that your health, which is so precious to the Empire, will be again restored by means of Bavarian waters.

"May the desire for the preservation of peace, common to all German princes, be realised, and may you thereby, my dear Prince, be granted plentiful refreshment from laborious work and disturbing anxieties.

"Meanwhile, I salute the Princess, and send you my most cordial regards, remaining, with the sentiments known to you, always

"Your sincere friend,

"LEWIS."

From Prince Bismarck to King Lewis.

"Kissingen: July 5, 1876.

". . . . Unfortunately politics do not leave me all the repose needed for a course of baths. The barren labours of diplomatists are caused rather by the general unrest and impatience, than by any actual danger to peace, for Germany at least. Barren those labours must necessarily be so long as the struggle within the Turkish borders does not grow to anything decisive. However the decision may turn out, a reciprocally sincere understanding between Russia and England will be always possible if—

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and for as long as—Russia does not strive to gain possession of Constantinople. Very much more difficult in the long run will be the adjustment of Austro-Hungarian and Russian interests. So far, however, the two imperial Courts are still in agreement, and in regarding the preservation of this agreement as a main task for German diplomacy, I know I can reckon on your Majesty's approval. It would seriously embarrass Germany if she had to choose between two such closely allied neighbours; for I feel sure that I am acting in accordance with the ideas of your Majesty, and of all German princes, if in our policy I advocate the principle that Germany of her own will should only take part in war of the preservation of undoubted German interests. As long as the Turkish question develops within the frontiers of Turkey it touches, in my most humble opinion, no German interests worth fighting about. Even a conflict between Russia and one or both of the Western Powers may develop without necessarily drawing Germany into sympathising. But in this matter much more difficulty is presented by the case of Austria and Russia becoming disunited, and I hope that the meeting of the two monarchs at Reichstadt may bear good fruit in confirming their friendship. Happily the Emperor Alexander wishes for peace and recognises that Austria's situation in regard to the Southern Slavonic movement is more difficult and more constraining than that of Russia. For the latter foreign interests, for Austria vital domestic interests, are at stake.

"V. BISMARCK."

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From King Lewis to Prince Bismarck.

"Hohenschwangau: July 16, 1876.

"I received with the greatest delight your news of the obviously favourable course of the cure. I thank you many times for the joyful tidings and heartily hope that you may soon be free from the troublesome consequences of the exhaustion due to the use of the Kissingen waters.

"I am also deeply obliged, my dear Prince, for your clear exposition of the political situation. The far-seeing, statesmanlike, survey, which is noticeable in your views regarding the position of Germany towards the present still somewhat threatening developments abroad, has my complete admiration, and I surely need not assure you that your powerful efforts to preserve peace have my warmest sympathy and my unbounded confidence. May the fortunate issue of the German policy and the gratitude of the German princes and stocks find you, my dear Prince, in possession of complete health and vigour.

"To that heartfelt wish I add most cordial salutations and the assurance of the real esteem and of the firmly-rooted confidence with which I, my dear Prince, am always Your sincere friend,

"LEWIS."

From Prince Bismarck to King Lewis.

"Kissingen: June 29, 1877.

. . . . . .

"So much business during my course of treatment was unavoidable because, through the difficulties which

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it made relative to the appointment of someone to act in my place, and against which I was not then well enough to contend, the *Reichstag* compelled me to keep the counter signatures in my hands even during my holiday. This was one of the weapons by which the majority in the *Reichstag* sought to obtain the introduction of the institution which they understand under the designation 'responsible minister to the Empire;' against that I have always stood on the defensive, not in order to remain sole minister, but in order to guard the constitutional rights of the Federal Council, and of its exalted constituents. Only at the cost of the latter could imperial ministries, if obtained, be endowed with the powers of conducting business, and therewith a step would be taken in the direction of centralisation, in which, as I believe, we should seek in vain the salvation of the future of Germany. It is in my humble judgment, not only the constitutional right, but also the political task of my non-Prussian colleagues in the Federal Council to support me openly in my opposition to the introduction of such an imperial ministry, and thereby to make it perfectly clear that so far I have not taken the field for the ministerial despotism of the chancellor, but for the rights of the members of the federation, and of the ministerial competence of the Federal Council. I have already expressed myself in this sense to Pfretzschner. I venture to assume that my views have corresponded with your Majesty's, and I am convinced that your Majesty's representatives on the Federal Council, themselves in combination with other colleagues, will by their support relieve me of a part of the struggle against the pressure in the *Reichstag* for a responsible imperial ministry.

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"If, as I hear, your Majesty's choice has fallen on Herr von Rudhart, I may, considering all I know of him from Hohenlohe, be with all respect thankful, and I can make sure in advance of being able to discuss with him, with confidential candour, not only the domestic, but also the foreign business of the Empire, a thing that in dealing with your Majesty's representative is necessary for me, both on business and on personal grounds. For the moment our position with regard to other countries of Europe remains the same as throughout the winter, and the hope that war will not touch us as strong as ever. The confidence of Russia in the trustworthiness of our neighbourly policy has visibly increased, and with it the prospect of averting such developments as might compel Austria, in her own interests, to interfere. Our endeavours to keep both empires friendly have been successful. Our friendship with England has so far not suffered thereby, and the rumours set afloat in that Court by political intriguers, that Germany may have designs about the acquisition of Holland, could only have met with transitory approval among ladies in high social circles; the calumniators were not tired, but the believers appear at last to be becoming so. Under these circumstances the foreign policy of the Empire is in a position to turn its unimpaired attention to the volcano in the west, which for three hundred years has so often littered Germany with its eruptions. I have no confidence in the assurances which we receive from there, and can give the Empire no other advice than to await a possible fresh attack, well equipped and with ordered arms.

"v. BISMARCK."

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From King Lewis to Prince Bismarck.

"Berg: July 7, 1877.

"I am compelled on this occasion, my dear Prince, to tell you with what lively regret I heard, a little while ago, the news of the possibility of your retirement. The greater my personal respect for you, and my confidence in the federal basis of your activity as a statesman, the more deeply should I have felt the disaster of such an event for me and for my country.

"To my real joy it has not taken place, and I hope, from the bottom of my heart, that your wisdom and activity may long be preserved to the Empire, and to Bavaria, its loyal member. You have also, my dear Prince, my deepest thanks for the satisfactory information regarding prospects of peace, and for the assurance that von Rudhart, my destined envoy to Berlin, will be received by you with confidence and goodwill. In the position assumed by you towards the question, constantly cropping up, of responsible imperial ministries you show yourself to be the strong refuge of the rights of the Federal princes, and it is with a real relief of mind that I receive your word that the salvation of Germany in the future is not to be sought in centralisation such as would follow from the creation of such ministries. Rest convinced that I shall omit nothing in order to secure to you at all future times the public and entire support of my representative in the Federal Council, in the struggle for upholding the basis of the constitution of the Empire, a line of action in which plenipotentiaries of other princes will certainly join.* "LEWIS."

* This was not verified in the case of Rudhart.

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From Prince Bismarck to King Lewis

"Kissingen: August 12, 1878.

"May I venture to lay at your Majesty's feet my most respectful thanks for the gracious orders given to the royal stables this year again for my sojourn here, and for the gracious recognition which your minister, von Pfretzschner, delivered by your instructions? Politics are for the time brought by the congress to a conclusion, whose fitness as regards Germany your Majesty is pleased to acknowledge in your gracious letter. Our own peace remains intact, the danger of a breach between Austria and Russia is removed, and our relations with both our friendly neighbour empires are maintained and made firmer. I am particularly glad that we have succeeded in actually strengthening, both in the cabinet and among the people of the Empire, the comparatively recent confidence of Austria in our policy. I can be convinced of your Majesty's approval of my future labours to keep the foreign policy of the Empire in the direction indicated, and to use corresponding action upon the Porte and elsewhere at the present time, so as to lighten as far as possible, by diplomatic support, the difficult task which Austria, somewhat late, it is true, has undertaken.

More difficult at this moment are the problems of home politics. Since the death of Cardinal Franchi my negotiations with the Nuncio are completely at a standstill while instructions are awaited from Rome. Those which the Archbishop of Neocæsarea brought demanded the re-establishment of the *status quo ante* 1870 in Prussia, *de facto,* if not actually by treaty. Such con-

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cessions of principle are impossible on both sides. The Pope does not possess the means with which to render us the required reciprocal services. The Centre party, the press hostile to the state, the Polish agitation, do not any of them obey the Pope, even if his Holiness were willing to command those elements to support the government. The forces united in the Centre party are now indeed fighting under the Papal flag, but are in themselves hostile to the state, even if the flag of Catholicism were to cease to cover them; their connection with the Progressives and Socialists on the basis of hostility to the state is independent of the dispute with the Church. In Prussia, at least, the electoral districts in which the Centre party is recruited, with the exception of the Westphalian and Upper Silesian nobility, who are led by the Jesuits, and by them badly brought up on purpose, were in opposition even before the dispute with the Church. Under these circumstances the See of Rome cannot possibly offer us an equivalent for the concessions it desires from us, especially since the Pope has at present no control over the influence of the Jesuits in German affairs. The powerlessness of the Pope without this support has been proved especially in the by-elections when Catholic votes were given to Socialist candidates against the will of the Pope, and when Dr. Moufang, at Mainz, publicly took pledges in that sense. The negotiations here with the Nuncio cannot go beyond the stage of mutual reconnoitring; they have convinced me that a settlement is not yet possible; but I ought, I think, to avoid breaking them off altogether, and the Nuncio appears to have the same desire. At Rome they obviously consider us more in need of help than we are;

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they overrate the support which they, with the best will, have the power to afford us in parliament. The elections to the *Reichstag* have pushed its centre of gravity farther to the right than was supposed. The preponderance of the Liberals is lessened, and even in a greater degree than appears from the figures. At the time of motion for dissolution I was in no doubt that the electors were more friendly to the government than were the deputies, and the consequence has been that many of the deputies, who, notwithstanding their opposition attitude, were again elected, only attained that end by promising to favour the government. If they fail to keep that promise, and a fresh dissolution follows, the electors will no longer have faith in them, and they will not again be elected. The result of this loosening of relations with the Liberal and Centralising parties will be, in my respectful opinion, a firmer cohesion of the federated governments one with the other. The growth of the Social-Democrat danger, the yearly increase of the menacing bands of robbers with whom we share our larger towns as dwelling-places, the refusal of support against this danger on the part of the majority in the *Reichstag*, renders obligatory on the German princes, on their governments, and on all supporters of order in the Empire, a solidarity of self-defence for which the demogogy of the orators and of the press will be no match so long as the governments remain united and resolute as they are at present. The aim of the German Empire is the protection of law; parliamentary activity was regarded at the establishment of the existing federation of princes and cities as a means of attaining the aim of federation, not as an end in itself. I hope that

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the attitude of the *Reichstag* will exempt the federated governments from the necessity of ever drawing practical consequences from that position. But I am not sure that the majority of the *Reichstag* now elected will correctly express the undoubtedly loyal and monarchical leanings of the German electors. Should that not be the case, the question of a new dissolution comes into the order of the day. I do not think, however, that a right moment for the decisions will occur this autumn. At a new appeal to the electors the question of economic and financial reform will, as soon as it is rightly understood by the people, be a comrade in federation with the federated governments; but to this end its discussion in the *Reichstag* is necessary, and that cannot be before winter. The need of increased revenue through indirect taxation is felt in all the federated states, and it was unanimously recognised by their ministers at Heidelberg. The opposition to it of parliamentary theorists finds, in the long run, no response in the producing majority of the population.

"I most humbly beg your Majesty to accept with gracious indulgence this brief sketch of the situation, and to honour me further with your Highness's favour. . . .

"v. BISMARCK."

From King Lewis to Prince Bismarck

"I offer you my sincere thanks for that interesting exposition of the present political situation which you did me the attention of sending me from Kissingen, and also for the points which your policy at large has laid

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down as aims for the immediate future. It is my most earnest wish that Kissingen and the after-cure may leave you in possession of the gigantic strength which the execution of your plans requires, and on which the ensuing session of the *Reichstag* will make heavy demands. May your vigorous operations be, as hitherto, blessed to the salvation of Germany, and may you be spared for many years to all of us who have the welfare of Germany at heart. I yield also to the firm hope that whenever the question of exorcising the Social-Democrat danger arises, the federal governments will always remain united and coherent.

"I beg you to express my deep respect to the Princess, and to give my best remembrances to your son, Count Herbert.

"Repeating my cordial thanks for your interesting and most welcome letter, I remain, my dear Prince, with the assurance of my particular esteem, regard, and confidence, always

"Your sincere friend,

"LEWIS."

"Hohenschwangau: July 29, 1879.

"My dear Prince Bismarck,—The favourable result of the discussions in the *Reichstag* on your great financial project affords me the welcome opportunity of heartily congratulating you. It needed your extraordinary vigour and energy to come off victorious in the fight with the views of adversaries, and the thousands of selfish interests which opposed themselves to your plan. The German lands stand under a fresh obligation to you, and press with reanimated hope towards the goal of material wel-

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fare which forms the indispensable basis of man's life as a citizen.

"May your sojourn at Kissingen be again successful in removing the effects of the fatigues and labours of the past months. To that heartfelt wish I join the assurance of the particular regard with which I am

"Your sincere friend,

"LEWIS."

From Prince Bismarck to King Lewis

"Kissingen: August 4, 1879.

"Your Majesty has made me very fortunate by the gracious acknowledgment which your letter of the 29th ult. contained for me. I am particularly grateful for the indulgence which you vouchsafe to the difficulties which the party passions in the federation, together with private interests, placed in the way of the reforms planned by the federated governments.

"In economic matters, touching the protection of German labour and production, we have, I venture to submit, in the immediate future, not to strive for something more than we have attained, but rather to watch its practical operation; and this again cannot be ascertained with certainty in the coming year, because the postponement decided on by the *Reichstag* of the date of the new tariff offers foreign countries further opportunity for swamping the German market without paying duty. The hoped-for salutary effect on the raising of our material prosperity will only become appreciable after the expiration of next year.

"In the region of finance, however, I believe that in

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an early sitting of the *Reichstag* the attempt to open out further sources of revenue for the federated governments will be renewed, since the sources of revenue cover perhaps the deficit of our budget, but do not suffice to make reforms in direct taxation possible, or to afford support to the needy local administrations.

"In political affairs the result of the proceedings of the federated governments has so far borne out my expectations, and the defective grouping and composition of our political parties and fractions of parties seem, through the discussions about them, to have suffered a lasting blow. For the first time the Centre party has begun to take a constructive part in the legislation of the Empire. If the gain is to be permanent, only experience can teach. The possibility is not excluded that, if no understanding is come to with the See of Rome, the party will return to its former purely critical attitude of opposition. According to outward appearances the prospect of an understanding with Rome is no nearer than last year. But I may perhaps attach some hopes to the fact that the papal nuncio, Jacobini, officially expressed to the ambassador, Prince Reuss, the wish to enter into negotiations, for which he has plenary power from Rome. I do not know the scope of that power, but I have declared myself willing, at the desire of the nuncio, to meet him and discuss the matter in the course of this month at Gastein.

"The National Liberal party will, I hope, through the last *Reichstag* session, be borne towards their division into a monarchical and a progressive—that is a republican—party. The attempt of the former President von Forckenbeck to bring the legislative authorities of

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the Empire under the direct control of a German federation of cities, and the inflammatory speeches made by Lasker and Richter to the unpropertied classes, have made the revolutionary tendencies of those members so clear and palpable that no further political association with them is possible on the part of adherents of the monarchical form of government. The plan of a federation of cities with its permanent committee at the seat of the *Reichstag* was modelled on the summoning of the *fédérés* from the French provincial towns in 1792. The attempt met with no response from the German people, but it serves to show how material for Convention deputies is to be found among our progressive members. The preparers of the Revolution are recruited pretty exclusively from the learned proletariat in which North Germany is richer than South. They are the educated, highly-cultured gentlemen, who, without property, without industry, without business, live either by their salary as civil or local servants, or by the press, or frequently by both; in the *Reichstag* they form considerably more than half of the members, while among the electors they form only a small percentage. These are the gentlemen who provide the revolutionary ferment, and who lead the progressive and National Liberal groups, and the press. In my humble opinion the splitting-up of their group forms an essential task of the preservative policy, and the reform of economic interests is the ground on which the governments can more and more approach that goal.

"I respectfully thank your Majesty for your kind wishes regarding the treatment I am undergoing, from which, according to my impressions hitherto, I hope to

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find, as in former years, a cure for the damage to my health caused by the winter. An essential part of the good result is due to the ease with which your Majesty has made it possible for me to enjoy the fine air of the neighbouring forests. The magnificent horses from your Majesty's stables make it easy to reach every point of the beautiful environs of Kissingen, a comfort doubly acceptable since age has robbed me of my walking powers. Your Majesty will graciously accept my sincerest thanks for this comfort, and for the consideration for me to which the granting of them testifies.

"V. BISMARCK."

"Kissingen: August 7, 1879.

"In consequence of the interest which your Majesty takes in the progress of the negotiations with Rome, I venture to lay before you transcripts of the following documents:

"1. The letter of the Pope to his Majesty the Emperor of May 30.

"2. The reply to it of June 21.

"3. The still unanswered letter of the Pope to his Majesty of July 9.

"V. BISMARCK."

From King Lewis to Prince Bismarck

"Berg: August 18, 1879.

"My dear Prince,—I thank you most cordially for both your welcome letters of the 4th and 7th inst., in which you give me such interesting information about the state of parties, and the situation of the matter at issue

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with Rome. Your negotiations with Rome have even now been successful since the considerably improved relations to the Curia had a decided influence on the Centre party, and through it, on the success of your work in financial reform. May your strenuous efforts to create a large Conservative party be likewise favoured with success. It is my earnest wish, my dear Prince, that health and strength may be preserved to you for mastering your great and important tasks, and it was with real pleasure that I learned from your letter that your sojourn at Kissingen promised the best results.

"Rest assured, my dear Prince, of my particular esteem, and of the complete esteem and confidence with which I am always

"Your sincere friend,

"LEWIS."

"Berg: September 1, 1880.

"My dear Prince,—The congratulations which you so politely offered me on my double celebration, and on the jubilee for the seven hundredth anniversary of my house, gave me real pleasure.[1] I heartily thank you for the well-tested sentiments of affection which are of so high value to me and to my country, and upon which, as hitherto, I place my sincere confidence for the future. With the close relations in which you, as the great and renowned Chancellor, stand to me, it was of especial interest to me to learn that my ancestors had already had occasion to esteem and distinguish your family. The satisfactory news which you, my dear Prince, give

[1] There is unfortunately no copy of the letter.

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me of your health is most gratifying, and I repeat how gladly I perceive that Bavarian waters should assist in the preservation of the admirable strength which you expend upon the welfare of the German states. With entire satisfaction I derived from your letter confidence in the certainty of peace, and I am grateful for the assurance of a report on the political situation.

"Accept, my dear Prince, assurances of my warmest sympathy and of the particular esteem for you and yours with which I am always

"Your sincere friend,

"LEWIS."

"Hohenschwangau: August 10, 1881.

"My dear Prince,—The good result of the cure at Kissingen fulfils my sincere wishes, and I hope that the compulsory rest will also cure the neuralgic pains which, to my great sorrow, are, you tell me, still troubling you. The exposition of the foreign and domestic situation, for which I have to thank your welcome and esteemed letter, was in the highest degree interesting to me. The great things which you achieve in both departments are the objects of my admiration. I am as sensible of the prospects of peace as of your firm stand against the lust after government by parliamentary majorities which is now cropping up in Bavaria also, although from another quarter. I shall take care that their goal, which is not compatible with the monarchical principle, and would produce endless disturbance and discord, is not attained. I am looking forward with the greatest interest to the approaching elections. If, however, the result is not according to our wish, I still firmly believe that your

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perseverance will succeed in establishing the financial and economic basement needed for placing the welfare of the German land, and especially the situation of the working-men, on a more satisfactory footing; of the honest co-operation of my government you may be certain. On the other hand, my dear Prince, I am confidently convinced that in the carrying out of your great ideas, you start from the federal principle on which the Empire and the independence of the individual states depend.

"I was heartily glad to learn that you were within the frontier of Bavaria. I hope that you will visit my country for many many years yet, and I send you, my dear Prince, with best wishes for the future, the assurance of the particular confidence and complete esteem with which I always remain

"Your sincere friend,

"LEWIS."

"Berg: August 27, 1881.

"My dear Prince,—I return you my warmest and most cordial thanks for the great pleasure your congratulations on my birthday afforded me. They, as well as the whole contents of your letter, give me a fresh proof of the sentiments of attachment on which I always with pleasure wholly rely. I hope that during your stay at Varzin you will have rest and fine weather, so that you will be able, in the enjoyment of perfect health, to go and occupy yourself as you are longing to do with your great tasks.

"Meanwhile, my dear Prince, I send you and yours

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my best remembrances, and with particular esteem remain always

"Your sincere friend,

"LEWIS."

"Schloss Berg: September 2, 1883.

"My dear Prince,—The kind letter which you were attentive enough to address to me from Kissingen gave me the liveliest pleasure. While I return you most cordial thanks for the congratulations on my double celebration therein expressed, I must not omit to tell you, my dear Prince, of the deep interest with which I followed the exposition enclosed in your letter of the political situation. To my great satisfaction, I was able to gather from it that there are at present no serious signs that cause apprehension of immediate danger to the peace of Europe. If, at the same time, the situation in Russia, and the unusual stationing of troops on the western frontier of Russia, are calculated to awaken some anxiety, I indulge in the hope that the fortunate understanding between Germany and Austria, which offers so powerful a pledge of peace for the Continent, and your wise and foreseeing policy, will be successful in averting a warlike issue, and that the peaceful intentions of the Emperor of Russia, clearly and publicly uttered a short time since, on the solemn occasion of the coronation at Moscow, will aid in assuring that victory. Receive, my dear Prince, with my warmest thanks for your always welcome letter, the expression of my pleasure that your health, which has been so long ailing—a fact that caused me deep sorrow—has, through the use of the Kissingen cure, and thanks to the excellent medical treatment,

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begun to improve. It is my most sincere wish that you may soon regain vigorous health, so that Germany may long be gladdened by the feeling of safety which her confidence in the activity and prudence of her great statesman inspires. Once again, my dear Prince, I repeat in these lines the assurance of the admiration and unchangeable affection towards you which ever animates me. With warmest remembrances

"I am always

"Your sincere friend,

"LEWIS."

"Elmau: September 27, 1883.

"My dear Prince Bismarck,—I have had the pleasure of receiving your letter of the 19th, and thank you warmly for your communications as well as for forwarding the accompanying document from St. Petersburg. I have studied both with the lively interest attached to everything that comes to me from you. But the most cheering thing your letter brought me was the news of your progress towards recovery, which will, I hope from my heart, lead to the complete restoration of your health. The hope thus founded that you, newly strengthened and refreshed, will be able completely to devote yourself in the future to the high task of your statesmanlike calling, enables me to regard with greater unconcern the further development of the political situation. Regarding more particularly the relations between Germany and Russia, I note with satisfaction the report of General von Schweinitz that there can at least be no doubt as to the Russian Emperor's sincere love of peace, and that of his chief ministers. That reassuring fact, in conjunction with the

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pleasant relations now happily prevailing between Germany and Austria—relations which, to my great joy, are confirmed afresh by your letter—helps to strengthen the hope of a continued preservation of peace.

"Accept, my dear Prince, with repeated expressions of my warmest wishes for the complete restoration of your strength, the assurance of the particular esteem with which I am

"Your sincere friend,

"LEWIS."

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CHAPTER XIX.

SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN.

My successor at Paris was Count Robert von der Goltz, who had been since 1855 ambassador at Athens, Constantinople, and St. Petersburg. My expectation that office would have disciplined him, that the transition from literary to business activity would have made him more sober and practical, and that the summons to what was then the most important post in Prussian diplomacy would have gratified his ambition, was not to be immediately or fully realised. At the end of the year 1863 I found myself obliged to have a written explanation with him, the whole of which is unfortunately no longer in my possession; of his letter of December 22, which was the immediate occasion of the correspondence, only a fragment[1] remains, and in the copy of my reply the beginning is missing. But even so this document has its value as a sketch of the situation at the time, and as illustrating the development that proceeded from it.

"Berlin: December 24, 1863.

". . . . As to the Danish matter, it is not possible that the King should have two Ministers of Foreign Affairs; I mean that the post most important in the critical question of the day should represent towards the

[1] See *Bismarck-Jahrbuch*, v. 231.

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King a policy opposed to that of his ministers. The friction of our state machine, already excessive, must not be still further increased. I can put up with any contradiction to myself personally, as long as it proceeds from so competent a source as yourself; but I cannot officially share with anyone the task of advising the King in this matter; and if his Majesty were to call on me to do any such thing, I should have to resign my post. I told the King this on the occasion of our reading one of your latest despatches; his Majesty considered my point of view very natural, and I can but hold to it. Nobody expects reports to be only the reflection of ministerial views; yours, however, are not reports in the usual sense, but assume the nature of ministerial proposals recommending to the King a policy opposed to that upon which he has already resolved with his assembled ministry in council, and has already followed for four weeks. What I may well call a sharp, if not hostile, criticism of this decision constitutes, however, a fresh ministerial programme, and is no longer an ambassadorial report. A view which so directly traverses ours may certainly do *harm,* but cannot do good; for it may elicit hesitation and indecision, and I prefer any policy to one that is vacillating.

"I entirely echo your observation that a 'question of Prussian policy quite simple in itself' is obscured by the dust arising from the Danish business, and the mirage attaching thereto. The question is whether we are a Great Power or a state in the German Federation; and whether we are, conformably to the former quality, to be governed by a monarch or, as in the latter case would be at anyrate admissible, by professors, district judges, and

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the gossips of the small towns. The pursuit of the phantom of popularity "in Germany" which we have been carrying on for the last forty years has cost us our position in Germany and in Europe; and we shall not win this back again by allowing ourselves to be carried away by the stream in the persuasion that we are directing its course, but only by standing firmly upon our legs, and being *first of all* a Great Power, and German Federal state *afterwards*. That is what Austria, to our injury, has always recognised as right for herself, and she will not allow herself to be wrested away, by the comedy she is playing with German sympathies, from her European alliances—if indeed she has any. If we go too far for her, she will pretend to go along with us a little way, especially will sign what we do; but the twenty per cent. of Germans that she has in her population are not in the last resort to be an element constraining her to let herself be carried away by us against her own interest. At the proper moment she will stay behind us, and will know how to find her proper line towards a European situation as soon as we give it up. Schmerling's policy, the counterpart of which appears to you to be an ideal one for Prussia, has ended in a *fiasco* for Austria. Our policy, which was so briskly opposed by you in the spring, has been verified in the Polish question, while the Schmerling policy has borne bitter fruit for her. Is it not indeed the most signal victory we could win that Austria, two months after the reform attempt, should be glad when nothing more is said about it, should be writing identical notes with us to her former friends, and joining in our threats towards her pet, the majority in the Federal Diet, to the effect that she will not allow herself

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to be bullied by majorities? |We have won this summer what we have been vainly striving after for twelve years, the split-up of the Bregenz coalition; Austria has adopted the very policy of ours that she openly scoffed at in October last; she has chosen the Prussian instead of the Würzburg alliance, and receives her assistance from us; and if we now turn our back upon her to-day we upset the ministry. Never before has the policy of Vienna been controlled to such a degree *en gros et en détail* from Berlin. Add to this that we are sought after by France—Fleury offers more than the King wants; our voice has, in London and St. Petersburg, the weight it had lost for twenty years; and all this eight months after you prophesied to me the most dangerous isolation as a result of our Polish policy. If we now turn our back upon the Great Powers in order to throw ourselves into the arms of the policy of the minor states—enmeshed as it is in the net of club-democracy—that would be the most wretched position, either at home or abroad, to which the monarchy could be brought. We should be pushed instead of pushing; we should lean for support upon elements which we do not control, which are necessarily hostile to us, and to which we should have to devote ourselves unconditionally. You believe that there is some hidden virtue in 'German public opinion,' Chambers, newspapers, and suchlike, which might support or help us in a 'Union' or 'Hegemony' policy. I consider that a radical error, a product of the fancy. Our strength cannot proceed from a press and parliamentary policy, but only from the policy of a great military Power, and we have not so much staying power that we can afford to fritter it away by fronting in the

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wrong direction for the sake of phrases and Augustenburg. You attach a great deal too much importance to the whole Danish question, and allow yourself to be blinded by the fact that it has become the general rallying-cry of the democracy which controls the speaking-trumpet of the press and the clubs, and gives a sparkle to this question, insignificant as it is in itself. Twelve months ago the question was that of two years' service; eight months ago it was Poland; and now it is Schleswig-Holstein. What was your own view of the European situation in the summer? You were dreading all sorts of dangers for us, and at Kissingen you did not at all conceal your views as to the incapacity of our policy: have all these dangers suddenly disappeared with the death of the King of Denmark? and are we now, at the side of Pfordten, Coburg, and Augustenburg, supported by all the chatterboxes and humbugs of the party of movement, suddenly to be strong enough to take an off-hand tone towards all four of the Great Powers? and have the latter suddenly become so good-natured or so impotent that we can boldly plunge into every sort of embarrassment without having any anxiety as to what they may do?

"You call it a 'marvellous' policy that we should have been able to realise the Gagern programme without a Constitution for the whole of Germany. I do not see how we could have got as far as that if we had been in the necessity of overcoming Europe in league with the Würzburgers, and thrown upon them for support. Either the governments would have stood by us honourably, and the reward of victory would have been one Grand Duke more in Germany, who in his anxiety to

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preserve his new sovereignty would vote in the *Bund* against Prussia—one Würzburger more, in fact; or on the other hand we should have been obliged (and this more probably) to cut the ground from under the feet of our own allies *by means of* an imperial constitution, and nevertheless have had to reckon upon their fidelity. If this did not succeed, as was to be expected, we should have been shown up; if it succeeded, we had the Union *together with* the imperial constitution.

"You speak of a conglomeration of states of seventy million people, with a million soldiers, who are to defy Europe united and compact. Consequently you attribute to Austria a persistence, dead or alive, in a policy which must lead to the hegemony of Prussia. Yet you would not trust further than you could reach her the state which possesses thirty-five of these seventy millions. Neither would I; but I consider it our correct policy at present to have Austria with us. Whether the moment of separation comes and on whose initiative it will come, we shall see. You ask: 'When on earth, then, are we to have war? What is the use of army reorganisation?' And your own reports describe to us the necessity to France of having a war in the spring and the prospect of a revolution in Galicia to boot. Russia has 200,000 men on their feet, over and above what is wanted for Poland, and she has no money to waste on fancy armaments. It looks, therefore, as if she had made up her mind for war. I am prepared for war combined with revolution. Then you say that 'we by no means expose ourselves to war.' I cannot make that fit in with your own reports during the last three months. I am at the same time by no means shy of war—quite the reverse; I am also as indifferent to

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'revolutionary' or 'Conservative' as I am to all phrases. Perhaps you will very soon be convinced that war is also part of my programme; but I consider your way of reaching a war the wrong one from the statesman's point of view. The fact that with regard to this you find yourself in agreement with Pfordten, Beust, Dalwigk, or whatever our opponents' names are, makes me look upon the side you represent not indeed as either revolutionary or Conservative, but as not the right one for Prussia. If the pothouse enthusiasm in London and Paris makes any impression, I shall be glad of it; it is part of our stock-in-trade, but it has not impressed me so far, and, in the case of a fight, furnishes us with few pence and no powder. You may call the convention of London revolutionary if you like; the Vienna treaties were ten times more so, and ten times more unjust towards many princes, estates, and countries; it is only by European treaties that European law is established. If, however, you want to apply the standard of morality and justice to these latter they must well-nigh all be abolished.

"If you were in office here instead of me, I fancy you would very soon be convinced of the impossibility of the policy you recommend to me to-day and regard as so exclusively 'patriotic' that you threaten to break off our friendship over it. I can only say, *'La critique est aisée;'* it is not difficult, amid the applause of the mob, to find fault with the government, especially a government which has been obliged to lay hold of several wasps' nests into the bargain. If the result proves that the government proceeded rightly, there is no further question for blame; if the government makes a *fiasco* over things which are in general beyond the control of human will and foresight,

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you have the glory of having prophesied at the right time that the government was on the 'woodman's road.'† I have a high opinion of your political insight, but I consider that I, too, am not stupid, though I am quite prepared to hear you say that this is self-delusion. Perhaps your opinion of my patriotism and judgment will rise when I tell you that, for the last fortnight, I have been taking my stand on the proposals made in your Report No. ——. With some difficulty I have determined Austria to convoke the Holstein Estates, in case we carry the matter through at Frankfort; we must first of all be all right in the country. The examination of the succession question at the *Bund* ensues with our consent, even if, having regard to England, we cannot vote for it. I had left Sydow without any instruction; he is not made for carrying out delicate instructions.

"It may be that other phases of the matter will follow that do not lie very remote from your programme; but how am I to make up my mind to let myself out frankly to you as to my latest ideas, after your declaring war against me politically, and pretty candidly acknowledging the intention to oppose the present ministry and its policy, and consequently to turn it out? On this point I am judging merely by the contents of what you write to me, and leave out of the question everything I have learnt through *colportage* and at third hand, as to your verbal and written diatribes with regard to myself. And yet I am bound as a minister, if the interests of state are not to suffer, to be ruthlessly frank towards our ambassador at Paris with regard to my policy from first to last. The friction which everyone in my position has

† "Path that goes nowhere."

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to overcome—with ministers and councillors at Court, with occult influences, with the Chambers, the press, and foreign Courts—must not be aggravated by the substitution for the discipline of my department, of a rivalry between the minister and the ambassador, and by my having to restore the indispensable homogeneity of the service by a discussion through the post. I can seldom write at such length as I can to-day, Christmas Eve, when all the officials are on leave; and I would not write the fourth part of this to anyone but you. I do so because I cannot bring myself to write to you officially and through the clerks in the same autocratic tone in which your reports to hand have been couched. I have no hope of convincing you, but I have sufficient confidence in your own official experience and impartiality to make me believe that you will grant me that only one policy can be carried out at a time, and that it must be the policy upon which the ministry and the King are at one. If you want to try to overthrow that and the ministry along with it, you must do it here in the Chamber and in the press, at the head of the Opposition, but not from your present position; in that case I should equally have to abide by your maxim that, in case of a conflict between patriotism and friendship, the former must decide. But I can assure you that my patriotism is of so pure and strong a nature that a friendship which has to give way to it may nevertheless be very cordial."[1]

[1] Cf. *Bismarck-Jahrbuch*, v. 232. See Goltz's answer to this letter with Bismarck's marginal remarks in *Bismarck-Jahrbuch*, v. 238.

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The gradations which appeared attainable in the Danish question, every one of them meaning for the duchies an advance to something better than the existing conditions, culminated, in my judgment, in the acquisition of the duchies by Prussia, a view which I expressed in a council held immediately after the death of Frederick VII. I reminded the King that every one of his immediate ancestors, not even excepting his brother, had won an increment of territory for the state; Frederick William IV. had acquired Hohenzollern and the Jahde district; Frederick William III. the Rhine province; Frederick William II., Poland; Frederick II., Silesia; Frederick William I., old Hither Pomerania; the Great Elector, Further Pomerania and Magdeburg, Minden, &c.; and I encouraged him to do likewise. This pronouncement of mine did not appear in the protocol. As Geheimrath Costenoble, who had drawn up the protocol, explained to me, when I asked him the reason of this, the King had opined that I should prefer what I blurted out not to be embedded in protocols. His Majesty seems to have imagined that I had spoken under the Bacchic influences of a *déjeuner,* and would be glad to hear no more of it. I insisted, however, upon the words being put in, and they were. While I was speaking, the Crown Prince raised his hands to heaven as if he doubted my sanity; my colleagues remained silent.

If the utmost we aimed at could not be realised, we might have, in spite of all Augustenburg renunciations, have gone as far as the introduction of that dynasty, and the establishment of a new middle state, provided the Prussian and German national interests had been put on a sure footing—these interests to be protected by what

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was the essential part of the subsequent February conditions—that is, a military convention, Kiel as a harbour for the *Bund,* and the Baltic and North Sea canal.

Even if, taking into consideration the European situation and the wish of the King, this had not been attainable without the isolation of Prussia from all the Great Powers, including Austria—the question was in what way, whether under the form of a personal union or under some other, a provisional settlement was attainable as regards the duchies, which must in any case be an improvement in their position. From the very beginning I kept annexation steadily before my eyes, without losing sight of the other gradations. I considered the situation set up in the public opinion of our opponents as our programme to be the one which I believed must absolutely be avoided—that is to say, to fight out Prussia's struggle and war for the erection of a new grand duchy, at the head of the newspapers, the clubs, the volunteers, and the states of the *Bund* (Austria excepted), and this without the assurance that the Federal governments would carry the affair through, despite every obstacle. Moreover, the public opinion that had developed in this direction, and even the President Ludwig von Gerlach, had a childlike confidence in the assistance England would render to isolated Prussia. The partnership of France would have been much more easy to obtain than that of England, had we been willing to pay the price which it might be foreseen it would cost us. I have never wavered in the conviction that Prussia, supported only by the arms and associates of 1848—and by these I mean public opinion, Diets, political clubs, volunteers, and the small contingents as they were then constituted—would have

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embarked upon a hopeless course and would have only found enemies in the Great Powers, in England also. I should have regarded as a humbug and a traitor any minister who had fallen back upon the erroneous policy of 1848, 1849, and 1850, which must have prepared a new Olmütz for us. Austria once with us, however, the possibility of a coalition of the other Powers against us disappeared.

Even though German unity could not be restored by means of resolutions of Diets, newspapers, and rifle-meetings, Liberalism nevertheless continued to exercise a pressure on the princes which made them more inclined to make concessions for the sake of the *Reich*. The mood of the Courts wavered between the wish to fortify the monarchical position by separate particularistic and autocratic policy in view of the advance of the Liberals, and anxiety lest peace should be disturbed by violence at home or abroad. No German government allowed any doubt to remain as to its *German* sentiments; but as to the way in which the future of Germany was to be shaped, neither governments nor parties were agreed. It is not probable that the Emperor William as Regent, or subsequently as King, could ever have been brought so far by the road which he had first trodden, under the influence of his consort, at the beginning of the new era, to do what was necessary to bring about unity, namely, to renounce the *Bund*, and use the Prussian army in the German cause.

On the other hand, however, it is not probable that he could have been guided into the path that led to the Danish war, and consequently to that in Bohemia, but for his previous attempts and endeavours in the direc-

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tion of Liberalism, and the obligations he had thereby incurred. Perhaps we should never have succeeded in holding him aloof from the Frankfort Congress of Princes in 1863 if his Liberal antecedents had not left behind in him a certain need of popularity in the Liberal direction, which before Olmütz would have been foreign to him, but since then was the natural psychological result of the desire to seek healing and satisfaction on the field of German policy, for the wounds inflicted upon his Prussian sense of honour on the same field. The Holstein question, the Danish war, Düppel and Alsen, the breach with Austria, and the decision of the German question on the battle-field—all this was a system of adventures upon which he would, perhaps, not have entered but for the difficult position into which the new era had brought him.

Even in 1864 it certainly cost us much trouble to loosen the threads by which the King, with the co-operation of the Liberalising influence of his consort, remained attached to that camp. Without having investigated the complicated legal questions of the succession, he stuck to his motto: "I have no right to Holstein." My representation that the Duke of Augustenburg had no right to the Ducal and the Schaumburg portion; never had had, and had twice (in 1721 and 1852) renounced his claims to the Royal portion; that Denmark had as a rule voted with Prussia in the Federal Diet; that the Duke of Schleswig-Holstein, from fear of the preponderance of Prussia, would hold with Austria—produced no impression. Even though the acquisition of these provinces, washed by two seas, and my historical reminder in the cabinet council of December 1863, were

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not without effect on the dynastic sentiments of the King, on the other hand the realisation of the disapproval which, if he threw over the Augustenburger, he would have to encounter at the hands of his consort, of the Crown Prince and Princess, of various dynasties, and of those who in his estimation at that time formed the public opinion of Germany, was not without effect.

Without doubt, public opinion in the cultured middle class of Germany was in favour of the Prince of Augustenburg, with the same want of judgment as at an earlier period palmed off "Polonism" as the German national interest, and at a later period the artificial enthusiasm for Battenbergian Bulgaria. The press was, in these two somewhat analogous cases, worked with distressing success, and public stupidity was as receptive as ever of its operation. Criticism of the government in 1864 had only reached the level of the phrase: "No, I don't like the new burgomaster." I do not know if there is anybody to-day who would consider it reasonable that, after the liberation of the duchies, a new grand duchy should be formed out of them, possessing the right of voting in the Federal Diet, and as an *ipso facto* result called to go in fear of Prussia and hold with her opponents. At that time, however, the acquisition of the duchies by Prussia was regarded as an act of profligacy by all those who, since 1848, had set us to play the part of representatives of national views. My respect for so-called public opinion—or, in other words, the clamour of orators and newspapers—has never been very great, but was still further materially lowered as regards foreign policy in the two cases compared above. How strangely, up to this time, the King's way of looking at things was

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impregnated with vagabond Liberalism through the influence of his consort and of the pushing Bethmann-Hollweg clique is evident from the tenacity with which he clung to the contradictory attitude in which the Austro-Frankfort-Augustenburg programme stood towards the Prussian efforts after National Unity. This policy could not have recommended itself to the King on logical grounds. He had taken it over, without making a previous chemical analysis of its contents, as an appurtenance of the old Liberalism, from the point of view of the earlier critical attitude of the heir to the throne, and of the counsellors of the Queen, Goltz, Pourtalès, &c. I will anticipate a little by here inserting the last sign of life given by the "Wochenblatt party," in the shape of the letter of Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg to the King, dated June 13, 1866, whose main points are as follows:[1]

"What your Majesty has constantly dreaded and avoided, what all persons of insight have foreseen, namely, that a serious quarrel with Austria would be utilised by France in order to increase her territory at the expense of Germany, [where?][2]—lies patent to all the world in Louis Napoleon's openly expressed programme. . . . The whole of the Rhineland for the duchies would not be a bad exchange for him; for he certainly would not be contented in the *petites rectifications des frontières* that he formerly claimed. And he is the omnipotent arbiter in Europe. . . . . I have no hostile feeling against the originator of this policy of ours. I am glad

[1] Published in full in L. Schneider's "*Aus dem Leben Kaiser Wilhelms I.*" I. 334 &c., also in Kohl's *Bismarck Register*, I. 287 &c.

[2] Marginal note in Bismarck's own hand.

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to recall how in 1848 I went hand in hand with him to strengthen the King's position. In March 1862 I advised your Majesty to select a helmsman of Conservative antecedents, possessing sufficient ambition, audacity and adroitness to steer the ship of state out of the rocks among which she had got; and I should have named Herr von Bismarck had I believed that he combined with these qualities that discretion and logical sequence of thought and action, the lack of which is scarcely pardonable in a youth, but in a man may endanger the life of a state which he guides. As a matter of fact, all Count Bismarck's action has from the first been full of contradictions. . . . Of old a decided advocate of the alliance with France and Russia, he linked, with the help to be furnished in Prussian interest to Russia against the Polish insurrection, political projects[1] which were sure to alienate both states from him. In 1863, when the death of the King of Denmark threw into his lap a task as fortunate as ever fell to a statesman's lot, he scorned to take advantage of it to place Prussia at the head of a unanimous rising [in resolutions][2] of Germany, whose union under the leadership of Prussia was his object; and preferred a union with Austria, the opponent in principle of this plan in order subsequently to become her irreconcilable foe. He ill-treated† the Prince of Augustenburg—to whom your Majesty was well-disposed, and from whom at that time everything might have been obtained—allowing him soon afterwards to be declared the rightful candidate by Count Bernstorff at the London

[1] Cf. vol. II. p. 106.

[2] Mariginal note in Bismarck's own hand.

† Cf. the Prince's letter of December 11, 1863, *infra*, p. 208.

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Conference. Then at the Peace of Vienna he pledges Prussia to dispose† definitely of the liberated duchies subject only to an understanding with Austria; and has arrangements inserted in it which plainly announce the 'annexation' he had in view. . . .

"Many regard these and similar measures, which for the very reason that they were self-contradictory constantly swung round to the opposite of what was intended, as faults of indiscretion. To others they appeared as the steps of a man who proceeds at random, throws everything into a tangle, and brings things into a situation from which he may make his profit, or of a gambler who after every loss only punts higher, and finally cries *va banque!*

"All this is bad, but what appears much worse in my eyes is that Count Bismarck, by this mode of procedure, should place himself in contradiction to the inclination and aims of his King, and show his skill chiefly in leading him step by step nearer to a goal diametrically opposed thereto, till a return appeared impossible. According to my opinion a minister's first duty is to give his master loyal counsel, to provide him with the means of carrying out his projects, and above all to keep the King's image unspotted in the eyes of all the world. Your Majesty's straightforward, righteous, and chivalrous sentiments are known to all, and have won for your Majesty universal trust and universal veneration. Count Bismarck, however, has brought things to such a pass that your Majesty's noblest words to your own country die away without effect because they are not believed; and any understanding with other Powers is become impossible, because the first condition thereof—

† Why not: He pledged Austria only with the consent of Prussia?

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I mean confidence—has been destroyed by a policy full of intrigue. Not a shot has yet been fired; an understanding is still possible on one condition. Our preparations for war must not be discontinued; nay, rather, if necessary, they must be redoubled, if we are triumphantly to encounter antagonists who aim at our annihilation, or to emerge with full honours from this complicated business. But every understanding is impossible so long as a man remains at your Majesty's side and possesses your decided confidence who has robbed your Majesty of the confidence of all the other Powers."[1]

By the time the King received this letter he had been freed from the entanglement of the arguments repeated therein by the Gastein Convention of August 14 to 20, 1865. The difficulties I had still to encounter in dealing with them, and the caution I had still to use, are evident from my following letter to his Majesty:

"Gastein: August 1, 1865.

"Your Majesty will be gracious enough to forgive me if a perhaps too excessive care for the interests of your service induces me to revert to the communications you have just done me the honour to make to me. The thought of a partition, even in the administration of the duchies, would, if it became notorious in the Augustenburg camp, arouse a violent storm in diplomatic circles and in the press—because people would see in it the beginning of a definitive partition, and would not doubt

[1] King William did not open the letter till he was at Nikolsburg in July 1866. His answer began: "I first opened your letter at Nikolsburg, and the place and date of my answer should be answer enough," &c. Cf. Schneider, *loc. cit.* I. 341.

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that those portions of the country which are to fall into the hands of exclusively Prussian administration are lost to Augustenburg. I believe with your Majesty that her Majesty the Queen will keep these communications secret, but if an intimation from Coblenz sent in reliance upon the relations between kinsfolk were to reach Queen Victoria, the Crown Prince and Princess, Weimar or Baden, then the very circumstance that the secret (which at his desire I told to Count Blome) had not been kept by us would arouse the distrust of the Emperor Francis Joseph, and wreck the negotiations. This wreck of the negotiations would lead almost inevitably to a war with Austria. Your Majesty will kindly credit it not only to my interest on your behalf, but also to my attachment to your person, if I say that I am dominated by the impression that your Majesty would embark on a war with different feelings and with a freer courage if the necessity for the war resulted from the nature of events and from a monarch's sense of duty, than if there were room for any afterthought that a premature disclosure of the intended solution of the question restrained the Emperor of Austria from consenting to the last expedient your Majesty could accept. Perhaps my anxiety is foolish; and even if it were well-grounded, and your Majesty should wish to disregard it, I should still think that God directs your Majesty's heart, and should therefore do my duty none the less joyfully; but for the safeguarding of my own conscience I should, nevertheless, respectfully suggest whether your Majesty would not like to command me to summon back the courier from Salzburg by telegraph. (§) The ministerial despatch-service might offer an ostensible occasion for this, and to-morrow

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another in place of him or the same man might start betimes. I most submissively beg to append a copy of what I have telegraphed to Werther as to the negotiations with Count Blome. I have the most respectful confidence in your Majesty's well-approved favour, in the persuasion that your Majesty, even when you do not approve of my scruples, will attribute my insistence on them to my sincere desire to serve your Majesty not only as my duty commands, but also to your personal contentment."

Where the "(§)" appears in the above letter, the King wrote in the margin: "Agreed.—I mentioned the matter because during the last twenty-four hours no mention of it had been made, and I regarded it as quite fallen out of the combination; later, the actual 'seisin' had taken place. By my communication to the Queen I wished to *pave the way* for the future transition to the 'seisin,' which had gradually developed out of the partition of the administration. Nevertheless I can at a later time so represent this if the proprietary partition actually comes about; that, however, I still continue to doubt, inasmuch as Austria would have to draw back too abruptly, after having pushed herself too far forward in favour of Augustenburg, and against occupation though it were only *one*-sided.

"W." [1]

After the Gastein Convention and the occupation of Lauenburg, the first addition made to the kingdom under King William, his frame of mind, so far as I could observe, underwent a psychological change; he developed

[1] *Bismarck-Jahrbuch*, VI. 202.

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a taste for conquest. This was nevertheless accompanied by a preponderating satisfaction that this increase—i.e. the harbour of Kiel, the military position in Schleswig, and right to construct a canal through Holstein—had been won in peace and amity with Austria.

I imagine that the right of absolute disposal of Kiel harbour had more weight with his Majesty than the impression produced by the newly-won pleasant district of Ratzeburg and its lake. The German fleet with Kiel harbour as the basis of its establishment had since 1848 been one of the enkindling thoughts around whose flame the German endeavours for unity were wont to centre and from which they drew their warmth. At times, however, the hatred of my parliamentary opponents for me had been stronger than their concern for the German fleet; and it seemed to me that the Party of Progress would then rather have seen Prussia's newly-won right to Kiel and the prospect of our maritime future which was bound up with it, in the hands of the auctioneer Hannibal Fischer than in those of the Bismarck ministry.[1] The right of complaining and grumbling over this government's annihilation of German hopes would have afforded the deputies far more satisfaction than the progress already made on the way to their fulfilment. I here insert some passages from a speech I delivered on June 1, 1865, in support of the extraordinary Navy Budget:[2]

"Certainly in no question during the last twenty years has public opinion in Germany been so unanimous as in the question of the navy. We have seen that the

[1] Cf. the speech of June, 1, 1865. *Politische Reden*, II. 356.
[2] *Politische Reden*, II. 355.

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political clubs, the press, and the Diets have given expression to their sympathies; and these sympathies have resulted in the collection of comparatively quite considerable sums. Reproaches were brought against the government and against the Conservative party for the tardiness and the parsimony with which they have proceeded in this direction; the Liberal parties were particularly active in this respect. We thought, therefere, that this proposal will be a genuine pleasure to you. . . .

"I was not prepared to find in the report of the committee an indirect apology for Hannibal Fischer, who brought the German fleet to the hammer. That German fleet, too, thus came to grief because party passion was more potent than public spirit in the German domains, equally in the higher administrative circles and in the lower. I hope the same destiny is not appointed for us.

"I was further somewhat surprised that so large a space in the report was devoted to technicalities. I do not doubt there are many of you who know more about naval matters than I do, and have been to sea more than I; but, gentlemen, that is not the case with the greater number of you; and yet I have to say that I would not trust myself on technical naval details to pass an opinion such as to give a reason for my vote, and a motive for rejecting a Navy Bill. I cannot therefore occupy myself in refuting this portion of your objections. . . .

"Your doubt as to whether I shall succeed in acquiring Kiel touches my department more closely. In the duchies we possess more than Kiel; we possess in them full sovereignty in common with Austria; and I did not know who could wrest from us this pledge, which so far exceeds in value the object aimed at by us, otherwise than

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by a war disastrous to Prussia. But if we keep this eventuality before our eyes, we might just as well lose *every* harbour actually in our possession. Our possession, it is true, is a joint one with Austria; nevertheless, it is a possession for whose abandonment we should be justified in laying down our conditions. One of these—indeed one quite indispensable, without the fulfilment of which we do not intend to give up this possession—is the future sole proprietorship of Kiel harbour by Prussia.

"In view of the rights which are in our hands and in those of Austria, and are unassailable so long as one of the pretenders does not succeed in satisfying us that he has a stronger right than that which has passed to us from King Chrstian IX. of Denmark,—in view of the rights which are possessed in full sovereignty by us and Austria, I do not see how the final fulfilment of our conditions could elude us, so long as we do not lose patience, but wait quietly to see if there is anybody who will undertake to besiege Düppel when the Prussians are inside it. . . .

"Nevertheless, if you doubt the possibility of realising our project, I have already in committee recommended an expedient. Limit your grants so that the amounts demanded shall only be payable when we actually possess Kiel, and say if you like, "No Kiel, no money!" I believe that you will not refuse such a condition to any other ministers than those who now have the honour to enjoy the confidence of his Majesty the King. . . .

"The confidence of the people in the wisdom of the King is great enough to make them say, that were the country in danger by the introduction of the Two Years' Service system of perishing or taking harm, the King

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would never allow it. It is just in consequence of earlier traditions that the importance of the constitution is underrated. I am convinced that you will not deceive their confidence in the wisdom of the King; yet I cannot deny that it makes a painful impression upon me when I see that, in view of a great national question which has occupied public opinion for twenty years, that very assembly which passes in Europe as the concentration of the intelligence and patriotism of Prussia can rise to no higher altitude than an impotent negative. That, gentlemen, is not the weapon with which to wrest the sceptre from the hand of the monarchy; nor is it the means whereby you will succeed in giving our constitutional system that stability and further development which it needs."

The Naval Budget was rejected.

In looking back upon this situation, we have lamentable proof of the degree of dishonesty and cosmopolitanism to which political parties with us attained when actuated by party hatred. Something similar may have happened elsewhere; but I know of no other country where the universal national feeling and love for the whole Fatherland offered so little resistance to the excesses of party passion as with us. The expression, considered apocryphal, which Plutarch puts into Cæsar's mouth, namely, that he would rather be the first man in a wretched mountain village than the second at Rome, has always struck me as a genuinely German idea. Only too many among us think thus in public life, and look about for the village; and when they cannot find it on the map, look for the group, sub-group, or coterie, as may be, in which they can be first. This state of mind which you may call egotism or independence—whichever you please

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—has found its realisation throughout German history, from the rebellious dukes of the first imperial period, down to the innumerable princes, imperial cities, imperial villages, abbeys, knights, holding immediately of the Empire, with, as its result to the Empire, feebleness and defencelessness. At the moment it finds more vigorous expression in the party system, splitting up the nation, than in any disintegration by way of laws or dynasties. Parties diverge less in respect of programmes and principles than of the persons who stand as *condottieri* at the head of each, and seek to gain for themselves as large a following as possible of deputies and pushing publicists, who hope to arrive at power along with their leader or leaders. Differences of principle and programme whereby the groups might be forced into conflict and hostility with one another are not forthcoming in sufficient strength to supply a motive for the passionate encounters which the groups think it necessary to wage between themselves, flinging Conservatives and Free Conservatives into separate camps. Even within the Conservative party certainly many felt that they did not agree with the *"Kreuzzeitung"* and its hangers-on. But to fix precisely and express convincingly in a programme the line where principles divide would be a difficult task even for the leaders and their henchmen—just as denominational fanatics, and not laymen only, when you ask them to give the distinguishing characteristics of the various confessions and directions of belief, or to explain the harm they fear for their soul's welfare if they do not fiercely assault some divagation of the heterodox, as a rule turn the dilemma, or leave you still thirsting for information. So far as parties are not grouped simply according to

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economic interests, they fight in the interests for the rival leaders of their groups, and not according to their personal wishes and ambitions; the whole question is one of Cephalus' or Paul, not a difference of principle.

The following letter from the King is a reminiscence of the Gastein Convention: [1]

"Berlin: September 15, 1865.

"To-day full possession is taken of the Duchy of Lauenburg, an act resulting from the great and admirable insight and circumspection with which you have adhered to my government. During the four years since I called you to the head of the government of the state, Prussia has won a position that is worthy of her history, and promises her, moreover, further fortune and glory yet to come. In order to express my thanks and bear open testimony to your distinguished services, for which I have so often had occasion to express my thanks, I hereby raise you and your descendants to the rank of Count, a distinction which will, at anyrate, prove how high my appreciation was of your services to your country.

"Your affectionate King,

"WILLIAM."

The negotiations between Berlin and Vienna and between Prussia and the other German states, which occupied the time from the Gastein Convention to the outbreak of the war, are known from the public records. In South Germany strife and conflict with Prussia partly gave way before a "Germano-patriotic" feeling; in

[1] *Bismarck-Jahrbuch*, VI. 203.

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Schleswig-Holstein, those whose wishes had not been gratified began to reconcile themselves to the new order of things; only the Guelfs were never weary of carrying on a paper war over the events of 1866.

The disadvantageous shape in which, as a reward for her exertions and achievements, the Vienna Congress left Prussia could only be maintained if we were sure of those states of the old confederacy that had been thrust in between the two parts of the monarchy as a result of the Seven Years' war. I had actively laboured to win over Hanover and my friend Count Platen to this end, and there was every prospect that at least a treaty of neutrality would be brought about when Count Platen was negotiating with me in Berlin on January 21, 1866, about the marriage of Princess Frederica of Hanover with our young Prince Albrecht. We had brought both Courts so far towards an understanding that the only thing still to be done was to bring about a meeting between the young lady and gentleman, in order to make sure of their impression of each other.

But as early as March or April they began in Hanover to call up their reserves under threadbare pretexts. Influences had been brought to bear upon King George, especially by his half-brother, the Austrian general, Prince Solms, who had come to Hanover and won the King over by an exaggerated description of the Austrian forces—800,000 men were said to be in readiness—and, as I learnt from confidential Hanoverian sources, also by an offer of territorial aggrandisement, to the extent of the district of Minden at least. My official inquiries with respect to the armaments of Hanover were answered with the information, which sounded almost

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like banter, that for economic reasons the autumn manœuvres must be held in the spring. [1]

As late as June 14 I had a conversation [2] at Berlin with the heir to the throne of Electoral Hesse, Prince Frederick William, in the course of which I recommended him to take a special train to Cassel and secure the neutrality of Electoral Hesse, or at least of the troops there, either by using his influence with the Elector or independently of him. The Prince refused to go any sooner than by the train in the time-table. I represented to him that in that case he would get there too late to prevent a war between Prussia and Hesse, and secure a continued existence for the Electorate. If the Austrians were victorious, he could always plead "vis major;" his neutral attitude might even win some bits of Prussian territory for him; but if we were victorious after his refusal to remain neutral, the Electorate would cease to exist. The Hessian throne was surely worth a special train. The Prince put an end to the interview with these words: "I suppose we shall meet once again in this life, and 800,000 good Austrian troops have still a word to say in the matter." And indeed the demand, addressed in the most friendly tone by the King to the Elector from Horsitz on the 6th, and from Pardubitz on July 8, that he should conclude an alliance with Prussia and withdraw his troops from the hostile camp, met with no response.

The hereditary Prince of Augustenburg, by declining the so-called February conditions, had also neglected the favourable moment. The following version has recently

[1] Cf. *Politische Reden*, IV. 137.
[2] Cf. Sybel, IV. 439, note 1.

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been put about from a Guelf quarter.[1] The author of it maintains that he heard from the Prince how in an audience with King William he had pledged himself to the concessions demanded, and how the King had assured him of his installation in his dukedom, promising him that the matter should be formally settled the next day by the minister-president. I am said to have presented myself to the Prince on the following day, but to have told him that my carriage was standing at the door, that I was obliged to go off that moment to the Emperor Napoleon at Biarritz. The Prince is said to have been required to leave a plenipotentiary at Berlin, and to have been not a little astonished to read in the Berlin newspapers on the following day that he had declined the Prussian propositions.

This is a clumsy invention, both in the main point and in all its particulars. The negotiations with the Hereditary Prince have been described by Sybel[2] from the documents; I have some particulars to add thereto from my own recollections and notes. The King never came to an agreement with the Hereditary Prince; I was never in the latter's house, and never mentioned the name of Biarritz or Napoleon to him. In 1864 I went to Baden on October 1, from thence on the 5th to Biarritz. In 1865 I went to the latter place direct on September 30, and in 1863 I was not at Biarritz at all. I twice had conversations with him, and the following letter[3] from him refers to the former of these, which took place on November 18, 1863.

[1] *Recollections and Experiences of Major-General Dammer* (Hanover, 1890) p. 94 &c.

[2] Vol. III. p. 337.

[3] *Bismarck-Jahrbuch*, v. 256.

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"Gotha: December 11, 1863.

"Your Excellency will allow me to address a few lines to you, occasioned by an article contained in No. 282 of the *Kreuzzeitung* [of December 3], of which I have only lately been informed. In this article I am reported to have said to a deputation, amongst other things, 'Herr von Bismarck is no friend of mine.' I am unable to quote my exact words on the occasion, as the reference is to an expression that fell from me in conversation. It is quite possible I may have expressed my regret that your political views on the present position of the Schleswig-Holstein affair did not coincide with my own—an opinion I had no hesitation in expressing openly to yourself during my last visit to Berlin. I am nevertheless absolutely certain that I never used the expression attributed to me in the newspaper; as I have always made it a fixed rule to keep political and personal matters apart. I therefore most genuinely regret that such a report should have found its way into the papers.

"I have considered it so much the more my duty not to withold this explanation, as I am bound to recognise the handsome manner in which you openly said to me at Berlin that personally you were quite convinced of the justice of my claim and approved of it; but that if I tried to get it recognised you could, in view of the engagements entered into by Prussia, as well as of the general situation, make me no promises.

"FREDERICK."

On January 16, 1864, his Majesty wrote to me[1] as follows:

[1] *Bismarck-Jahrbuch*, v. 254.

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"My son came to me again yesterday evening to present to me the request of the Hereditary Prince of Augustenburg, that I would receive a letter from him by the hand of Herr Samwer, and to ask if in order to do this I would not attend his *soirée,* where I could meet S. in a private apartment quite unobserved. I declined to do so till I had read the Prince's letter, and so bade my son send it to me. This was done, and I enclose it.[1] It contains nothing objectionable, except at the end, where he asks me if I cannot give S. any hope. Perhaps you can get an answer ready by to-morrow for me to give to S.[2] If I chose to see him *incognito* at my son's, I could still give him no other hope than what is indicated in the stipulation[3] i.e. that when we have won the victory we will see what new bases can be established for the future, and await the verdict of Frankfort-on-Main as to the succession.

"W."

Again, on January 18:[4]

"I inform you that after all I resolved to see Samwer at my son's for about six to ten minutes in his presence.[5] I spoke to him quite in the tenor of the projected answer,[6] but somewhat *more coolly* and *very seriously.*

[1] Published in Jansen-Samwer's "*Schleswig-Holstein's Befreiung,*" p. 695, appendix 11.

[2] See this letter of the King of January 18 *composed* by *Bismarck,* in Jansen-Samwer, p. 601, appendix 13.

[3] Signed on January 16 by Rechberg and Werther.

[4] *Bismarck-Jahrbuch,* v. 255.

[5] Samwer's memorandum gives the course of this conversation, *op. cit.* p. 696 &c. appendix 12.

[6] i.e. the answer to the letter of the 18th, which was laid before the King in draft on the 17th.

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Above all, I said most decidedly that the Prince must in no case make a raid into Schleswig.

"W."

In a memorandum of February 26, 1864, the Crown Prince indicated, as justified by the circumstances, the following claims of Prussia:[1] Rendsburg to be a federal fortress, Kiel to be a Prussian marine station, accession to the Customs Union, the construction of a canal between the two seas, and a military and naval convention with Prussia. He cherished a hope that the Hereditary Prince would be ready to agree to these terms.

After the Prussian plenipotentiaries at the London Conference had on May 28, 1864, delivered the declaration that the German Powers desired the constitution of Schleswig-Holstein as an independent state under the sovereignty of the Hereditary Prince of Augustenburg, I had a conversation with the Prince at my residence on the evening of June 1, 1864, from nine till twelve o'clock, in order to decide whether I could advise the King to support his candidature. The conversation turned principally on the points indicated by the Crown Prince in the memorandum of February 26. The expectation of his Royal Highness, that the Hereditary Prince would be ready to agree to this, I did not find to be justified. The substance of the latter's explanations has been given by Sybel,[2] from the documents. What

[1] It is based on the letter of the Hereditary Prince Frederick of February 19, 1864; Jansen-Samwer, p. 705 &c.

[2] Sybel, III. 337 &c. Cf. Bismarck's account of this conversation in the *Staats-Anzeiger* of July 2, 1865; also the expressions in the speeches of June 13, 1865, and December 20, 1866,

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he most vigorously resisted were the cessions of territory for the purpose of constructing fortresses; why, they might run to a square [German] mile, he said. I was obliged to consider that our demand was refused, and that no good would come of any further negotiation, at which the Prince seemed to hint, for he said, on taking his leave: "We shall see each other again, I suppose." He did not say it in the threatening sense in which Prince Frederick of Hesse said the same words to me two years later, but as an expression of a mind not made up. I never saw the Hereditary Prince again till the day after the battle of Sedan, when he was wearing the uniform of a Bavarian general. After peace was concluded with Denmark on October 30, 1864, the conditions were formulated under which we would regard the formation of a new Schleswig-Holstein state as not endangering the interests of Prussia and Germany. On February 22, 1865, they were communicated to Vienna. They coincided with those recommended by the Crown Prince.

One of the enterprises, the possibility of which I had advanced, is now[1] after long delay being carried into execution: the North Sea and Baltic Canal. In the interest of German sea power, which was then capable of development only under the name of Prussia, I (and not I alone) had attached great importance to the building of the canal and the possession and fortification of

Politische Reden, III. 387, 389; IV. 102 &c.; the Duke's statement in Jansen-Samwer, p. 731 (cf. p. 336 &c.).

[1] That is at the date of the writing of these Reminiscences, 1891—92.

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both its mouths. The desire to make a concentration of our naval forces possible, by cutting through the stretch of land separating the two seas, was still very vigorous as an after-effect of the almost morbid enthusiasm for the fleet in 1848; it slumbered, however, for a time when we had the territory in question at our free disposal. In my endeavours to revive this interest I met with opposition in the Committee for National Defence, of which the Crown Prince was President, but Count Moltke the real head.

The latter, as a member of the *Reichstag*, gave it as his opinion on June 23, 1873,[1] that the canal would only be navigable in summer, and was of doubtful military value; with the forty to fifty million thalers which it would cost, it would be better to build a second fleet. The reasons advanced against me in the suit for the royal decision weighed more with the King because of the great regard his Majesty had for the military authorities than because of their intrinsic value. They culminated in the argument that so costly a public work as the canal would require for its protection in time of war a number of troops which could not be withdrawn from the army without weakening it. The number of men we should require to have at our disposal for the protection of the canal in the event of the Danes co-operating with a landing of the enemy was estimated at 60,000 men. I objected that we should always need to protect Kiel (with its suburbs), Hamburg, and the road from the latter to Berlin, even if there were no canal in existence. Owing to the excessive pressure of other business and the manifold struggles of the 'seventies, I

[1] Moltke's speeches. *Werke*, VII. 25.

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could not apply the time and energy necessary to overcome the resistance offered by these authorities to my project in the imperial councils, and the matter was pigeon-holed. I ascribe the resistance I experienced principally to that military jealousy with which in 1866, 1870, and also later, I had to maintain struggles that were more painful to my feelings than most others.

In my endeavours to win the Emperor's oonsent I rather gave prominence to the military considerations likely to appeal to him than to any political advantages on commercial grounds. The Dutch navy had the advantage of being able to use inland canals which allowed a passage for the largest vessels. Our corresponding need of a communication by canals is essentially increased by the existence of the Danish peninsula and the division of our fleet between two separate seas. If our united fleet can issue from the harbour of Kiel, from the mouth of the Elbe, and even, if the canal is lengthened, from the Jahde also, without a blockading foe being aware of it beforehand, the latter would be compelled to maintain a squadron equivalent to our whole fleet in each of the seas. On this and other grounds I was of opinion that the making of the canal would be more advantageous for the defence of our coasts than if we applied the cost of it to building fortresses and enlarging our fleet, especially as we had not unlimited resources for manning our fleet. My wish was to continue the canal from the lower Elbe so far in a westerly direction that the mouths of the Weser, the Jahde, and eventually also of the Ems, could be made into *sortie* ports which the blockading enemy would have to observe. The western continuation of the canal would

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be comparatively less costly than the cutting through of the backbone of the Holstein peninsula; inasmuch as there are lines of uniform elevation, by means of which we could turn the high ground of the Geest on the promontory between the Weser and the mouth of the Elbe.

In view of a blockade, presumably by the French, the protection of Heligoland by the neutrality of England has till now been to our advantage; a French squadron could have no coal *depôt* there, but would be obliged, in order to get supplies, to return to a French port at regular and not too long intervals, or would have to maintain a large number of tenders constantly going backwards and forwards. Now we should have to defend the rock with our own forces if we wished to hinder the French from gaining a firm footing there in case of war. What the reasons were that relaxed the resistance of the Committee of National Defence in the year 1885, I do not know. Perhaps Count Moltke had in the meantime convinced himself that the idea of an alliance between Germany and Denmark, which he had formerly entertained, was impracticable.

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CHAPTER XX.

NIKOLSBURG.

On the evening of June 30, 1866, his Majesty, together with the headquarters, entered Reichenberg. The town, with a population of 28,000, contained 1,800 Austrian prisoners, and was occupied by no more than 500 Prussian artillerymen armed with old carbines. Only a few leagues off lay the Saxon cavalry. They could have reached Reichenberg in a night, and carried off the whole of our headquarters, his Majesty included. Thanks to the telegraph, it was generally known that we had our quarters at Reichenberg. I took the liberty of calling the King's attention to the fact, and in consequence the command was given for the artillerymen to repair singly, and without attracting attention, to the castle, where the King had his quarters. The military set were offended at this interference of mine; and in order to prove to them that my concern was not for *my own* security, I quitted the castle (whither his Majesty had commanded me) and retained my quarters in the town. This was the germ of a bad feeling towards me on the part of the military authorities on account of my personal position towards the King, which proceeded from departmental jealousy, and was destined to develop still further in the course of this campaign and of the French war.

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After the battle of Königgrätz the situation was such that a favourable response on our part to the first advances of Austria with a view to peace negotiations, was not only possible, but seemed demanded by the interference of France. The latter dates from the telegram, addressed to his Majesty, which arrived at Horřicz* between July 4 and 5, in which Louis Napoleon informed the King that the Emperor Francis Joseph had ceded Venetia to him, and had invited his intervention. The brilliant success of the King's arms compelled Napoleon to quit[1] the reserve he had hitherto maintained. This interference was evoked by our victory; up to this time Napoleon had calculated on our being defeated and in need of assistance. If on our part the victory of Königgrätz had been utilised to the utmost by the attack of General von Etzel, and by the energetic pursuit of the defeated foe by means of our cavalry, which was still intact, in all probability the mission of General von Gablenz to the Prussian headquarters would even then have led to the conclusion not merely of an armistice, but also to the bases of the future peace, considering the moderation which prevailed on our part, and was at that time still shared by the King, in respect to the conditions of peace—a moderation which, however, even then claimed more from Austria than was of any use, and which would have left us as our future associates all the states which had hitherto been members of the Confederation, but with their territories diminished and their feelings offended. At my suggestion his Majesty

* So written by the general staff. It is pronounced Horsitz.

[1] See the text of the telegram in L. Schneider, I. 253 &c.

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sent to the Emperor a reply which was dilatory, but yet rejected any armistice which did not contain guarantees for peace.

Subsequently, at Nikolsburg, I asked General von Moltke what he would do if France actively intervened. His reply was: "I should adopt a defensive attitude towards Austria, confining myself to the line of the Elbe, and in the meantime prosecuting the war actively against France."

This opinion confirmed me still more in my resolution to advise his Majesty to make peace on the basis of the territorial integrity of Austria. I was of opinion that, in case of French interference, we must either make peace with Austria, imposing moderate conditions, and at the same time if possible contract an alliance with her with a view to an attack on France, or else we must quickly and completely cripple Austria by a sharp onslaught, and also by furthering disaffection in Hungary, and perhaps in Bohemia as well; until then we must maintain a defensive attitude towards France instead of towards Austria, as Moltke wished. I believed that the war against France, which Moltke said he would conduct first of all, and that rapidly, would not be so easy; that France had, indeed, but little strength left to take the offensive, but, judging from historical experience, would soon be strong enough to act on the defensive in the country itself, and so spin the war out. Then, perhaps, we should not be able victoriously to maintain our defensive against Austria on the Elbe if we had to carry on a war of invasion in France, with Austria and South Germany as hostile elements in our rear. I was moved

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by this prospect to still livelier exertions in the cause of peace.

A participation on France's part in the war would have brought, at the moment, perhaps only 60,000 French troops (perhaps still less) into the struggle in Germany. Nevertheless, this accession of strength to the South German federal army would have sufficed to restore energy and unity of command, probably under a French commander-in-chief. The Bavarian army alone, at the time of the suspension of hostilities, was said to be 100,000 strong, and, with the other available German troops, all of them good and brave soldiers, and 60,000 Frenchmen, we should have been brought face to face with an army of 200,000 men from the south-west, under united and vigorous French leadership, instead of the former timid and disunited troops; and we should have had no equivalent forces with which to meet them in front of Berlin without weakening ourselves in the direction of Vienna. Mainz was occupied by federal troops under the command of the Bavarian general, Count Rechberg; had the French once got into the place it would have taken hard work to get them out again.

Under the pressure of the French intervention, and at a time when it was impossible to see whether we should succeed in making head against them in the field of diplomacy, I resolved to advise the King to make an appeal to the Hungarian nationality. If Napoleon intervened in the war in the manner indicated, if Russia's attitude remained doubtful, and especially if the cholera made further ravages in our ranks, our position might

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become so difficult that we should be obliged[1] to seize every weapon offered us by the outbreak of the national movement, not only in Germany, but also in Hungary and Bohemia, in order to avoid succumbing.

On July 12, in our quarters at Czernahora, there was held a council of war—or as the military preferred to call it, a meeting to hear the reports of the generals; for the sake of brevity, however, and in order to be more intelligible, I make use of the former expression, which von Roon* also uses, although Field-Marshal Moltke, in a paper sent to Professor von Treitschke on May 9, 1881, has observed that no "council of war" was held in either of the wars.[2]

In 1866, whenever I was within reach, I was included in these deliberations, which were held under the presidency of the King, at first regularly and afterwards at longer intervals. On this particular occasion we discussed the direction of our further advance upon Vienna. I arrived late at the discussion, and the King explained to me that the point before them was how to capture the fortifications of the Floridsdorf lines in order to reach Vienna; that to do this the nature of the works demanded that heavy artillery should be brought up from Magde-

[1] Cf. the statement in the speech of January 16, 1874, *Politische Reden*, VI. 140.

* In his letter to his wife of February 7, 1871. *Denkwürdigkeiten*, III.[4] 297.

[2] See Moltke, *Gesammelte Schriften*, III. 415 &c.

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burg,* and that for this a fortnight's time would be necessary. After breaches had been made, the works would have to be stormed, and for this the probable loss was reckoned at 2,000 men. The King asked for my opinion on the question. My first impression was that we could not lose a fortnight without bringing at least the danger of *French* interference very much nearer than it otherwise would be.** I laid stress on my apprehension, and said: "We cannot spend fourteen days in waiting without considerably increasing the dead-weight of the French *arbitrium*. I asked whether we were obliged to storm the Floridsdorf fortifications at all, or if we could not take them in flank—by making a quarter wheel to the left we could make for Pressburg and there the Danube could be crossed with less trouble. The Austrians would then either accept battle in an unfavourable position south of the Danube with their front to the east, or would retreat upon Hungary, and then Vienna could be taken without drawing a sword. The King asked for a map, and gave his decision in favour of this proposal. The execution of the plan was adopted, unwillingly as it appeared to me, but it was nevertheless carried out.

* In the work by the general staff we read under the date July 14 (p. 484): Colonel Mertens was telegraphed to at Dresden to have in readiness fifty heavy guns that were on their way thither [and consequently, it is to be presumed, had not yet arrived], so that they could be sent off without loss of time by the railroad as soon as the order for them came. The railway on the other side of Lundenburg was destroyed. General von Hindersin was therefore ordered to bring together a park of transport material at the place indicated.

** The situation was similar to what it was in 1870 before Paris.

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According to the work of the general staff (p. 522) the following order from the general headquarters was issued on July 19: "It is the intention of his Majesty the King to concentrate the army in a position behind the Russbach. In this situation the army will first of all be in a position to resist an attack which the enemy might undertake with about 150,000 men from Floridsdorf. Afterwards, it can, from this position, either reconnoitre and attack the Floridsdorf entrenchments, or, leaving behind a corps of observation before Vienna, march off as quickly as possible to Pressburg. Both armies will push forward their advance-guards and reconnoitring parties to the Russbach in the direction of Wolkersdorf and Deutsch-Wagram. Simultaneously with this advance, an attempt will be made to take Pressburg by surprise, and there to secure if necessary the passage of the troops across the Danube."

It was my object, in view of our subsequent relations with Austria, as far as possible to avoid cause for mortifying reminiscences, if it could be managed without prejudice to our German policy. A triumphant entry of the Prussian army into the hostile capital would naturally have been a gratifying recollection of our soldiers, but it was not necessary to our policy. It would have left behind it, as also any surrender of ancient possessions to us must have done, a wound to the pride of Austria, which, without being a pressing necessity for us, would have unnecessarily increased the difficulty of our future mutual relations. It was already quite clear to me that we should have to defend the conquests of the campaign in further wars, just as Frederick the Great had to defend the results of his two first Silesian wars in the fiercer

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fire of the Seven Years' war. That a war with France would succeed that with Austria, lay in the logic of history, even had we been able to allow the Emperor Napoleon the petty expenses which he looked for from us as a reward for his neutrality. As regards Russia, too, it is doubtful what would happen if it were then made clear to her what accession of strength the national development of Germany would bring to us. We could not foresee how far the later wars would make for the maintenance of what had already been won; but in any case it would be of great importance whether the feeling we left behind in our opponents were implacable or the wounds we had inflicted upon them and their self-respect were incurable. Moved by this consideration, I had a political motive for avoiding, rather than bringing about, a triumphal entry into Vienna in the Napoleonic style. In positions such as ours was then, it is a political maxim after a victory not to enquire how much you can squeeze out of your opponent, but only to consider what is politically necessary. The ill-feeling which my attitude earned for me in military circles I considered was the result of a military departmental policy to which I could not concede a decisive influence on the policy of the state and its future.

When it came to the point of dealing with Napoleon's telegram of July 4, the King had sketched out the conditions of peace as follows: a reform of the Federation under the headship of Prussia; the acquisition of Schleswig-Holstein, Austrian Silesia, a strip on the frontier of Bohemia, and East Friesland; the substitution of the respective heirs-apparent for the hostile sovereigns of Hanover, Electoral Hesse, Meiningen, and Nassau.

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Subsequently other demands were advanced, which partly originated with the King himself, and were partly due to external influences. The King wished to annex parts of Saxony, Hanover, Hesse, and especially to bring Anspach and Baireuth again into the possession of his house. The reacquisition of the Franconian principalities touched his strong and justifiable family sentiment very nearly.

At one of the first Court entertainments at which I was present in the 'thirties, a fancy ball at the residence of Prince William, as he then was, I recollect seeing him in the costume of the Elector Frederick I. The choice of this dress, so different in character from the others, was the expression of family sentiment, of the pride of descent—and seldom can this costume have appeared more natural and becoming than it was when worn by Prince William, then in his thirty-seventh year; and I have always had a lively recollection of his appearance in it. This strong dynastic family feeling was perhaps still more sharply marked in the Emperor Frederick III., but it is certain that in 1866 the King felt it harder to renounce his claims upon Anspach and Baireuth than to give up Austria and Silesia, German Bohemia, and parts of Saxony. I gauged the proposed acquisitions from Austria and Bavaria by the question, whether the inhabitants, in case of future war, would remain faithful to the King of Prussia in the event of the withdrawal of the Prussian officials and troops, and continue to accept commands from him; and I had not the impression that the population of these districts, which had become habituated to Bavarian and Austrian conditions, would be disposed to meet Hohenzollern predilections.

The old original seat of the Brandenburg Margraves

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to the south and east of Nuremberg, if formed, let us say, into a Prussian province with Nuremberg as its capital, would scarcely be a part of the country which Prussia in case of war could denude of troops and leave under the protection of its devotion to the ruling house. During the short period of the Prussian occupation dynastic feeling had taken no very deep root in the province despite the skilful administration of Hardenberg, and had since then been completely forgotten during the subsequent Bavarian period, except where it was kept in remembrance in religious agencies; this occurred but seldom and never lasted long. Even if occasionally the feelings of the Bavarian Protestants were offended, their sensibility on the point had never expressed itself in the shape of a recollection of Prussia. Moreover, after such an excision, the Bavarian stock, from the Alps to the Upper Palatinate, in the exasperation caused by such a mutilation of the kingdom, would always have to be regarded as an element difficult to appease and dangerous to future unity in proportion to its indwelling strength. Nevertheless I did not succeed at Nikolsburg in getting the King to accept my views as to the peace we were to conclude. I was therefore obliged to let Herr von der Pfordten, who had arrived there on July 24, travel back empty-handed, and had to content myself with a criticism of his attitude before the war. He was nervous about giving up Austrian support altogether, although he would very readily have withdrawn himself from the influence of Vienna if it could have been done without danger; but the old tendencies of the Confederation of the Rhine, or reminiscences of the position which the minor German states had occupied under French protection from 1806

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to 1814, had no Place in his mind—in short, an honest and erudite, but politically by no means adroit, German professor. These considerations, which influenced me as regards the Franconian principalities, I insisted upon to his Majesty with regard to Austrian Silesia as well, which was one of the most loyal provinces of the Austrian Empire, and had, moreover, a preponderance of the Slavonic element in its population. I also insisted upon it with regard to the Bohemian districts, Reichenberg, the Eger valley, and Carlsbad, which the King at the instance of Prince Frederick Charles, wanted to retain as a *glacis* in front of the Saxon mountains. To this was to be added that Karolyi later categorically refused every cession of territory, even down to the tiny district of Braunau which I had mentioned to him, and the possession of which had some importance in the interest of our railways. I preferred to renounce our claim even to that, if insistence upon it threatened to delay a conclusion of preliminaries and accentuate the danger of French interference.

The King's wish to retain West Saxony, Leipzig, Zwickau, and Chemnitz, in order to establish communication with Baireuth, collided with Karolyi's declaration that he must insist upon the integrity of Saxony as a *conditio sine qua non* of the conditions of peace. This difference in Austria's treatment of her allies was due to the personal relations of the Emperor of Austria and the King of Saxony; and also to the behaviour of the Saxon troops after the battle of Königgrätz, for during the retreat they had been the steadiest and least broken body of troops in the army. The other German troops had fought bravely, when they were actually engaged,

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but this happened too late, and without practical result, and there prevailed in Vienna an impression, which was not justified by circumstances, that Austria had not been sufficiently supported by her allies, especially Bavaria and Wurtemberg.

The work of the general staff says (under the date July 21): "At Nikolsburg negotiations had been going on for several days, the immediate object of which was a five days' truce. The point was, above all else, to gain time for diplomacy.* Now, when the Prussian army occupied the Marchfeld, a fresh catastrophe was immediately impending."

I asked Moltke if he considered our enterprise at Pressburg as dangerous, or whether we might be free of all concern about it. So far we had not a spot upon our white waistcoat. If we were sure of a happy issue to it, we must allow the battle to be fought out, and the truce postponed by half a day; victory would naturally strengthen our position in negotiating; otherwise it would be better to abandon the enterprise altogether. He replied that he considered the issue as doubtful and the operations as risky; but in war everything was hazardous. This decided me to recommend to the King the following arrangement as to the truce: to suspend hostilities at midday on the 22nd and not resume them till midday on the 27th. At half-past seven on the morning of the 22nd, General von Fransecky received news of the truce that was to commence on the same day, with instructions to make his dispositions accordingly. The battle in

* In view of the French interference, diplomacy had less time to lose than the army.

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which he was engaged at Blumenau had therefore to be suspended at twelve o'clock.

Meanwhile in my conferences with Karolyi and with Benedetti, who, thanks to the clumsiness of our military police in the rear of the army, had succeeded in reaching Zwittau on the night of July 11 to 12, and there suddenly appeared beside my bed, I had found out the conditions on which we could procure peace. Benedetti declared as the basis of Napoleon's policy, that an augmentation of Prussia to the extent of four million souls in North Germany at the utmost, with the retention of the line of the Main as the frontier on the south, would not entail French intervention. He hoped, I suppose, to form a South German confederation affiliated to France. Austria withdrew from the German confederation, and was ready to recognise all the arrangements that the King might make in North Germany, reserving however the integrity of Saxony. These conditions contained all we wanted; that is to say, a free hand in Germany.

I was firmly resolved, in consequence of the above considerations, to make a cabinet question of the acceptance of the peace offered by Austria. The position was difficult. All the generals shared the disinclination to break off the uninterrupted course of victory; and during these days the King was more often and more readily accessible to military influences than to mine. I was the only person at headquarters who was politically responsible as a minister and forced by the exigencies of the situation to form an opinion and come to a deci-

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sion without being able to lay the responsibility for the result upon any other authority, either in the shape of the decision of my colleagues or superior commands. I was just as little able as anyone to foresee what shape future events would take, and the consequent judgment of the world; but I was the only one present who was under a legal obligation to hold, to utter, and to defend an opinion. This opinion I had formed after careful consideration of the future of our position in Germany and our relations to Austria; and was ready to be responsible for it and to defend it before the King. I was well aware that the general staff nicknamed me the "Questenberg in the camp"—an identification with the *Hofkriegsrath* in "Wallenstein," which was not flattering to me.

On July 23, under the presidency of the King, a council of war was held, in which the question to be decided was whether we should make peace under the conditions offered or continue the war. A painful illness from which I was suffering made it necessary that the council should be held in my room. On this occasion I was the only civilian in uniform. I declared it to be my conviction that peace must be concluded on the Austrian terms, but remained alone in my opinion; the King supported the military majority. My nerves could not stand the strain which had been put upon them day and night; I got up in silence, walked into my adjoining bedchamber and was there overcome by a violent paroxysm of tears. Meanwhile, I heard the council dispersing in the next room. I thereupon set to work to commit to paper the reasons which in my opinion spoke for the conclusion of peace; and begged the King, in

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the event of his not accepting the advice for which I was responsible, to relieve me of my functions as minister if the war were continued. With this document[1] I set out on the following day to explain it by word of mouth. In the antechamber I found two colonels with a report on the spread of cholera among their troops, barely half of whom were fit for service.* The alarming figures confirmed my resolve to make the acceptance of the Austrian terms a cabinet question. Besides my political anxieties, I feared that by transferring the operations to Hungary, the nature of that country, which was well known to me, would soon make the disease overwhelming. The climate, especially in August, is dangerous; there is great lack of water; the country villages are widely distributed, each with many square miles of open field attached; and, finally, plums and melons grow there in abundance. Our campaign of 1792 in Champagne was in my mind as a warning example; on that occasion it was not the French but dysentery that caused our retreat. Armed with my document I unfolded to the King the political and military reasons which opposed the continuation of the war.

We had to avoid wounding Austria too severely; we had to avoid leaving behind in her any unnecessary bitterness of feeling or desire for revenge; we ought rather to reserve the possibility of becoming friends again with our adversary of the moment, and in any case to regard the Austrian state as a piece on the European chessboard and the renewal of friendly relations with

[1] Partly printed in Sybel, v. 294.

* During the campaign 6, 427 men succumbed to this disease.

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her as a move open to us. If Austria were severely injured, she would become the ally of France and of every other opponent of ours; she would even sacrifice her anti-Russian interests for the sake of revenge on Prussia.

On the other hand, I could see no future acceptable to us for the countries constituting the Austrian monarchy, in case the latter were split up by risings of the Hungarians and Slavs or made permanently dependent on those peoples. What would be put in that portion of Europe which the Austrian state from Tyrol to the Bukowina had hitherto occupied? Fresh formations on this surface could only be of a permanently revolutionary nature. German Austria we could neither wholly nor partly make use of. The acquisition of provinces like Austrian Silesia and portions of Bohemia could not strengthen the Prussian state; it would not lead to an amalgamation of German Austria with Prussia, and Vienna could not be governed from Berlin as a mere dependency.

If the war were continued, the probable theatre would be Hungary. The Austrian army which, if we crossed the Danube at Pressburg, would not be able to hold Vienna, would scarcely retreat southwards, where it would be caught between the Prussian and Italian armies, and, by its approach to Italy, once more revive the military ardour of the Italians which, already depressed, had been restricted by Louis Napoleon; it would retreat towards the east, and continue its defence in Hungary—if only in the expectation of the prospective intervention of France and the weakening of Italy's interest in the matter, through France's agency. Moreover I held, even from a purely military standpoint, and ac-

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cording to my knowledge of Hungarian territory, that a prosecution of the war there would not repay us, and that the successes to be won there would be out of all proportion to the victories we had hitherto gained, and consequently be calculated to diminish our *prestige*—quite apart from the fact that the prolongation of the war would pave the way for a French intervention. We must finish off rapidly; before France won time to bring further diplomatic action to bear upon Austria.

To all this the King raised no objection, but declared the actual terms inadequate, without, however, definitely formulating his own demands. Only so much was clear, that his claims had grown considerably since July 4. He said that the chief culprit could not be allowed to escape unpunished, and that justice once satisfied, we could let the misguided partners off more easily, and he insisted on the cessions of territory from Austria which I have already mentioned. I replied that we were not there to sit in judgment, but to pursue the German policy. Austria's conflict in rivalry with us was no more culpable than ours with her; *our task was the establishment or initiation of German national unity under the leadership of the King of Prussia.*

Passing on to the German states, he spoke of various acquisitions by cutting down the territories of all our opponents. I repeated that we were there not to administer retributive justice, but to pursue a policy; that I wished to avoid, in the German federation of the future, the sight of mutilated territories, whose princes and peoples might very easily (such is human weakness) retain a lively wish to recover their former possessions by means of foreign help; such allies would be very un-

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reliable. The same would be the case if, for the purpose of compensating Saxony, Würzburg or Nuremberg were demanded of Bavaria, a plan, moreover, which would interfere with the dynastic predilection of his Majesty for Anspach. I had also to resist plans which were aimed at an enlargement of the Grand Duchy of Baden, the annexation of the Bavarian Palatinate, and an extension in the region of the lower Main. The Aschaffenburg district of Bavaria was at the same time regarded as a fit compensation to Hesse-Darmstadt for the loss of Upper Hesse, which would result from the projected Main frontier. Later, at Berlin, the only part of this plan still under negotiation was the cession of that portion of Bavarian territory which lay on the right bank of the Main, inclusive of the town of Baireuth, to Prussia; the question then arose whether the boundary should run on the Northern or Red Main or the Southern or White Main. What seemed to me to be paramount with his Majesty was the aversion of the military party to interrupt the victorious course of the army. The resistance which I was obliged, in accordance with my convictions, to offer to the King's views with regard to following up the military successes, and to his inclination to continue the victorious advance, excited him to such a degree that a prolongation of the discussion became impossible; and, under the impression that my opinion was rejected, I left the room with the idea of begging the King to allow me, in my capacity of officer, to join my regiment. On returning to my room I was in the mood that the thought occurred to me whether it would not be better to fall out of the open window, which was four storeys high; and I did not look round when I

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heard the door open, although I suspected that the person entering was the Crown Prince, whose room in the same corridor I had just passed. I felt his hand on my shoulder, while he said: "You know that I was against this war. You considered it necessary, and the responsibility for it lies on you. If you are now persuaded that our end is attained, and peace must now be concluded, I am ready to support you and defend your opinion with my father." He then repaired to the King, and came back after a short half-hour, in the same calm, friendly mood, but with the words: "It has been a very difficult business, but my father has consented." This consent found expression in a note written with lead pencil on the margin of one of my last memoranda, something to this effect: "Inasmuch as my Minister-President has left me in the lurch in the face of the enemy, and here I am not in a position to supply his place, I have discussed the question with my son; and as he has associated himself with the Minister-President's opinion, I find myself reluctantly compelled, after such brilliant victories on the part of the army, to bite this sour apple and accept so disgraceful a peace." I do not think I am mistaken as to the exact words, although the document is not accessible to me at present. In any case I have given the sense of it; and, despite its bitterness of expression, it was to me a joyful release from a tension that was becoming unbearable. I gladly accepted the royal assent to what I regarded as politically necessary without taking offence at its ungracious form. At this time military impressions were dominant in the King's mind; and the strong need he felt of pursuing the hitherto dazzling course of victory perhaps in-

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fluenced him more than political and diplomatic considerations.

The only residuum that the above note of the King's, which the Crown Prince brought me, left in my mind was the recollection of the violent agitation into which I had been obliged to put my old master, in order to obtain what I considered essential to the interests of the country if I were to remain responsible. To this day these and similar occurrences have left no other impression upon me than the painful recollection that I had been obliged to vex a master whom personally I loved as I did him.

After the preliminaries with Austria had been signed, the plenipotentiaries of Wurtemberg, Baden, and Darmstadt appeared. I refused for the present to receive the Wurtemberg minister, Varnbüler, because our irritation against him was much stronger than it was against Pfordten. Politically he was more skilful than the latter, but, on the other hand, less fettered by German national scruples. His temper at the outbreak of the war had expressed itself in a "*Væ victis!*" and was to be explained by the relations between Stuttgart and France, which were chiefly maintained by the partiality of the Queen of Holland, a Würtemberg princess.

As long as I remained at Frankfort she took much interest in me, encouraging me in my opposition to Austrian policy, and further evincing her anti-Austrian sentiments by singling me out with an obvious purpose for marked favour at the house of her envoy Herr von Scherff, and not without discourtesy towards the Austrian

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envoy-president, Baron Prokesch, at a time when Louis Napoleon still cherished the hope of a Prussian alliance against Austria, and already had the Italian war in his mind. I leave it undecided whether even at that time the predilection for Napoleonic France alone dictated the policy of the Queen of Holland, or if it were only the restless desire to meddle in politics at any price that led her to take sides in the struggle between Prussia and Austria, and moved her to a conspicuously bad treatment of my Austrian colleague and to a marked preference of me. Anyhow, after 1866 I found the Princess, who in former days had been so gracious to me, among the keenest opponents of the policy which I was following in anticipation of the breach of 1870. It was in the year 1867 that suspicion was first thrown upon us in French official statements of having designs on Holland, especially in the expression of the Minister Rouher in a speech against Thiers, March 1867, to the effect that France would not tolerate our advance to the Zuider Zee. It is not probable that the Zuider Zee had been discovered by the French themselves, or even that the orthography of the name was correctly given in the French press without foreign help. It is allowable to conjecture that the thought of this piece of water was suggested to French suspicion from Holland. Even the Netherland descent of M. Drouyn de Lhuys does not entitle me to presume in his colleague so exact a local knowledge of geography outside the French frontier.

As I assigned the policy of Würtemberg to the Rhine-confederation category, I determined for the time to decline to receive Herr von Varnbüler at Nikolsburg. Moreover, a conversation between us which was brought

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about by the intervention of Prince Frederick of Würtemberg—brother of the commander of our Guards—and the Grand Princess Helene who was very kindly disposed towards us, was barren of political result. I did not negotiate with Herr von Varnbüler till a later date at Berlin; and his mobile susceptibility to the political impressions of every situation showed itself in the fact that he was the first of the South German ministers with whom I could conclude the well-known treaty of alliance.

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CHAPTER XXI.

THE NORTH GERMAN BUND.

At Berlin I was ostensibly occupied with Prussia's relations to the newly-acquired provinces and the other North German states, but in reality with the humour of the foreign Powers and in pondering upon their probable attitude. To me, and perhaps to everyone, our internal affairs had a provisional and immature aspect. The reaction of the aggrandisement of Prussia, of the impending negotiations concerning the North German Confederation and its constitution, made our internal development appear to be carried along by the current as much as our relations to foreign states, whether in or outside Germany, in consequence of the European situation prevailing when the war had been interrupted. I took it as assured that war with France would necessarily have to be waged on the road to our further national development, for our development at home as well as the extension beyond the Main, and that we must keep this eventuality in sight in all our domestic as well as in our foreign relations. In some aggrandisement of Prussia in North Germany Louis Napoleon saw not only no danger to France, but a means against the unification and national development of Germany; he believed that the non-Prussian portions of Germany would then feel a greater need of French support. He cherished re-

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miniscences of the confederation of the Rhine, and wished to hinder development in the direction of a United Germany. He believed that he could do this because he did not realise the national drift of the time, and judged the situation in accordance with his schoolboy reminiscences of South Germany, and from diplomatic reports which were only based on ministerial moods and sporadic dynastic feeling. I was convinced that their importance would vanish; I assumed that a United Germany was only a question of time, that the North German Confederation was only the first step in its solution; but that the enmity of France and perhaps of Russia, Austria's need of revenge for 1866, and the King's Prussian and dynastic particularism must not be called too soon into the lists. I did not doubt that a Franco-German war must take place before the construction of a United Germany could be realised. I was at that time preoccupied with the idea of delaying the outbreak of this war until our fighting strength should be increased by the application of the Prussian military legislation not only to Hanover, Hesse, and Holstein, but, as I could hope even at that time from the observation I had made, to the South Germans. I considered a war with France, having regard to the success of the French in the Crimean war and in Italy, as a danger which I at that time over-estimated; inasmuch as I imagined the attainable number of troops in France, their order and organisation, and the tactical skill, to be higher and better than proved to be the case in 1870. The courage of the French soldiers, the high pitch of national sentiment and of injured vanity, were verified to the full extent, as I had estimated them in the eventuality of a

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German invasion in France, based on a remembrance of the experiences of 1814, of 1792, and of the Spanish War of Succession at the beginning of last century, when the invasion of foreign armies always produced phenomena like putting a stick into an ant-heap.

I at no time regarded a war with France as a simple matter, considered quite apart from the possible allies that France might find in Austria's thirst for revenge, or in Russia's desire for a balance of power. My strenuous efforts to postpone the outbreak of war until the effect of our military legislation and our military training could be thoroughly developed in all portions of the country which had been newly joined to Prussia, were therefore quite reasonable; and this aim of mine was not even approximately reached in the Luxemburg question in 1867. Each year's postponement of the war would add 100,000 trained soldiers to our army. In the attitude I took up towards the King on the question of the bill of indemnity, and in dealing with the question of the constitution in the Prussian Diet, I felt the urgent necessity of letting other countries see no trace of actual or prospective obstacles consequent on our internal condition; I wished to offer them the spectacle of a united national sentiment; and the more so inasmuch as it was impossible to judge what allies France would have on her side in a war against us. The negotiations and *rapprochements* between France and Austria soon after 1866, at Salzburg and elsewhere, under the direction of Herr von Beust, might prove successful; and the very appointment of that Saxon minister in a bad temper to the control of Viennese policy already pointed to the probability that it would take the direction of revenge.

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Italy's attitude was not to be reckoned upon as soon as French pressure was applied, as we discovered by her submissiveness to Napoleon in 1866. During a conference I had with General Govone in Berlin, in the early part of 1866, he was horrified when I expressed the wish that he should enquire at home if we could rely on Italy's loyalty to her engagements even against Napoleonic ill-humour. He replied that a question of this kind would be telegraphed to Paris the very same day with the question: "What answer shall be given?" To judge by the attitude of Italian policy during the war, I could not place any definite reliance on public opinion in Italy, not only on the ground of Victor Emmanuel's personal friendship to Louis Napoleon, but also by the standard of the partisanship announced by Garibaldi in the name of Italian public opinion. Not only my apprehensions but the public opinion of Europe considered that a league of Italy with France and Russia was not outside the bounds of probability.

From Russia active support of such a coalition was scarcely to be expected. By the influence which during the time of the Crimean war I had been able to exercise in favour of Russia on the resolutions of King Frederick William IV., I had gained for myself the goodwill of the Emperor Alexander, and his confidence in me was strengthened during my residence as ambassador in St. Petersburg. Meanwhile, in the Russian cabinet, under the leadership of Gortchakoff, the doubt as to the advantage for Russia of so important an increase of Prussian power began to outweigh the Emperor's friendship for King William and his gratitude for our policy during the Polish question of 1863. If the communication be

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accurate which was made by Drouyn de Lhuys to Count Vitzthum von Eckstädt,[1] then in July 1866 Gortchakoff invited France to a common protest against the overthrow of the German confederation, and experienced a rebuff. In his first feeling of surprise, immediately upon the despatch of Manteuffel to St. Petersburg, the Emperor Alexander had acquiesced in the result of the Nikolsburg preliminaries in general and *obiter*. At first the hatred against Austria, which, since the time of the Crimean war, had dominated the public opinion of Russian "society," had found satisfaction in her defeat; this feeling, however, was opposed to such Russian interests as were connected with the Czar's influence in Germany and the dangers with which it was threatened by France.

I took it indeed for granted that we could count on Russian support against any coalition that France might form against us; but that we should not receive it till we had had the misfortune to suffer defeats, by which the question whether Russia could tolerate the proximity of a victorious Franco-Austrian coalition on her Polish frontiers would be brought nearer. The inconvenience of such a neighbour would perhaps be increased, if, instead of the anti-papal kingdom of Italy, the Papacy itself were to become a third in the league of the two great Catholic Powers. I considered it, however, probable, that until the nearer approach of a danger such as would result from Prussian defeat, Russia would not be displeased, or at all events would offer no interference, if a numerically superior coalition had poured a little water into our wine of 1866.

[1] *London, Gastein and Sadowa*, Stuttgart, 1890, p. 248.

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From England we certainly could rely on no active support against the Emperor Napoleon, although English policy required a strong and friendly continental Power with many battalions, and this necessity had been attended to under the Pitts, father and son, to the advantage of Prussia, later to that of Austria, then under Palmerston, until the Spanish marriages, and afterwards again under Clarendon, in favour of France. The requirement of England's policy was either an *entente cordiale* with France, or the possession of a strong ally against the enmity of France. England is, indeed, ready to accept the stronger German-Prussia in place of Austria; and during the situation of the autumn of 1866 we could in any case count upon platonic goodwill and didactic newspaper articles from over there; but this theoretical sympathy would scarcely have condensed itself into an active support by land and by sea. The occurrences of 1870 have shown my estimation of England to have been correct. The representation of France in North Germany was undertaken in London with a readiness which was at least mortifying to us; and during the war England never compromised herself so far in our favour as thereby to endanger her friendship with France: on the contrary.

It was chiefly under the influence of these reflections in the sphere of our foreign policy that I determined to regulate the movements of our home policy in accordance with the question whether it would support or injure impressions of the power and coherence of the state. I argued to myself that our first great aim must be in-

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dependence and security in our foreign relations; that to this end not only was actual removal of internal dissensions requisite, but also any appearance of such a thing must be avoided in the sight of the foreign Powers and of Germany; that, if we first gained independence of foreign influence, we should then be able to move freely in our internal development, and to organise our institutions in as liberal or reactionary a manner as should seem right and fitting; that we might adjourn all domestic questions until we had secured our national aims abroad. I never doubted the possibility of giving to the royal power the strength necessary in order that our clock should be correctly set at home, provided that we first secured the necessary freedom from without to live as an independent great nation. Until that should be accomplished I was ready, if necessary, to pay *"black-mail"* to the Opposition, in order to be in a position in the first place to throw into the scale our full power, and diplomatically to use the appearance of this united power and, in case of need, even to have the possibility of letting loose national revolutionary movements against our enemies.

At a meeting of one of the committees of the Prussian Diet a question was asked by the Progressist party, and, I suspect, not without knowledge of the efforts of the Extreme Right, whether the government was prepared to introduce the Prussian Constitution in the New Provinces. An evasive answer would have aroused, or would have animated, the distrust of the constitutional parties. I was firmly convinced that it was imperative not to obstruct the development of the German question by any doubts as to the loyalty of the government to the Con-

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stitution; that every fresh dissension between the government and the Opposition would have strengthened the resistance to our new national structure which we had to expect from abroad. Thereupon I strove to convince the Opposition and its speakers that they would do well for the present to allow all domestic constitutional questions to remain in the background; that the German nation, when once united, would be in a position to settle her internal affairs as she thought best; that it was our present task to place the nation in this position; but all these considerations were useless in face of the narrow-minded provincial party politics of the Opposition leaders, while the discussions raised by them placed the national aim too much in the front not only in the sight of foreign countries, but also in that of the King, who at that time still looked more to the power and greatness of Prussia than to the constitutional union of Germany. He was wholly free from any ambitious calculations in the direction of Germany. Even in 1870 he described the title of Emperor contemptuously as a "fancy-dress major," whereupon I answered, that his Majesty certainly already by the Constitution held the full prerogatives of the position, and that the title of Emperor merely implied the outward sanction; to some extent, as if an officer, who was commissioned to take charge of a regiment, were definitely appointed to the command. It was more flattering to his dynastic feeling to exercise this power simply as the born King of Prussia, than as an Emperor who had been elected and set up by a constitution—just as a prince who commands a regiment prefers to be addressed as your Royal Highness, and not as Colonel; and a lieutenant who is a count as Count, and

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not as Lieutenant. I had to take these peculiarities of my master into account if I wished to retain his confidence; and without him and his confidence my way in German politics would have been impassable.

Looking to the necessity, in a fight against an overwhelming foreign Power, of being able, in extreme need, to use even revolutionary means, I had had no hesitation whatever in throwing into the frying-pan, by means of the circular despatch of June 10, 1866, the most powerful ingredient known at that time to liberty-mongers, namely, universal suffrage, so as to frighten off foreign monarchies from trying to stick a finger into our national omelette. I never doubted that the German people would be strong and clever enough to free themselves from the existing suffrage as soon as they realised that it was a harmful institution. If it cannot, then my saying that Germany can ride when once she has got into the saddle [1] was erroneous. The acceptance of universal suffrage was a weapon in the war against Austria and other foreign countries, in the war for German Unity, as well as a threat to use the last weapons in a struggle against coalitions. In a war of this sort, when it becomes a matter of life and death, one does not look at the weapons that one seizes, nor the value of what one destroys in using them: one is guided at the moment by no other thought than the issue of the war, and the preservation of one's external independence; the settling of affairs and reparation of the damage has to take place

[1] Speech on March 11, 1867. *Political Speeches*, III. 184.

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after the peace. Moreover, I still hold that the principle of universal suffrage is a just one, not only in theory but also in practice, provided always that voting be not secret, for secrecy is a quality that is indeed incompatible with the best characteristics of German blood.

The influence and the dependence on others that the practical life of man brings in its train are God-given realities which we cannot and must not ignore. If we refuse to transfer them to political life, and base that life on a faith in the secret insight of everybody, we fall into a contradiction between public law and the realities of human life which practically leads to constant frictions, and finally to an explosion, and to which there is no theoretical solution except by way of the insanities of social-democracy, the support given to which rests on the fact that the judgment of the masses is sufficiently stultified and undeveloped to allow them, with the assistance of their own greed, to be continually caught by the rhetoric of clever and ambitious leaders.

The counterpoise to this lies in the influence of the educated classes, which would be greatly strengthened if voting were public,* as for the Prussian Diet. It may be that the greater discretion of the more intelligent classes rests on the material basis of the preservation of their possessions. The other motive, the struggle for gain, is equally justifiable; but a preponderance of those who represent property is more serviceable for the security and development of the state. A state, the control of

* Secret voting was, of course, first brought into the law through Fries's motion, while the proposals of the government advocated public voting.

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which lies in the hands of the greedy, of the *novarum rerum cupidi,* and of orators who have in a higher degree than others the capacity for deceiving the unreasoning masses, will constantly be doomed to a restlessness of development, which so ponderous a mass as the commonwealth of the state cannot follow without injury to its organism. Ponderous masses, and among these the life and development of great nations must be reckoned, can only move with caution, since the road on which they travel to an unknown future has no smooth iron rails. Every great state-commonwealth that loses the prudent and restraining influence of the propertied class, whether that influence rests on material or moral grounds, will always end by being rushed along at a speed which must shatter the coach of state, as happened in the development of the French Revolution. The element of greed has the preponderance arising from large masses which in the long run must make its way. It is in the interests of the great mass itself to wish decision to take place without dangerous acceleration of the speed of the coach of state, and without its destruction. If this should happen, however, the wheel of history will revolve again, and always in a proportionately shorter time, to dictatorship, to despotism, to absolutism, because in the end the masses yield to the need of order; if they do not recognise this need *a priori,* they always realise it eventually after manifold arguments *ad hominem;* and in order to purchase order from a dictatorship and Cæsarism they cheerfully sacrifice that justifiable amount of freedom which ought to be maintained, and which the political society of Europe can endure without ill-health.

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I should regard it as a serious misfortune, and as an essential weakening of our security in the future, if we in Germany are driven into the vortex of this French cycle. Absolutism would be the ideal form of government for an European political structure were not the King and his officials ever as other men are to whom it is not given to reign with superhuman wisdom, insight and justice. The most experienced and well-meaning absolute rulers are subject to human imperfections, such as over-estimation of their own wisdom, the influence and eloquence of favourites, not to mention petticoat influence, legitimate and illegitimate. Monarchy and the most ideal monarch, if in his idealism he is not to be a common danger, stand in need of criticism; the thorns of criticism set him right when he runs the risk of losing his way. Joseph II. is a warning example of this.

Criticism can only be exercised through the medium of a free press and parliaments in the modern sense of the term. Both correctives may easily weaken and finally lose their efficacy if they abuse their powers. To avert this is one of the tasks of a conservative policy, which cannot be accomplished without a struggle with parliament and press. The measurement of the limits within which such a struggle must be confined, if the control of the government, which is indispensable to the country, is neither to be checked nor allowed to gain a complete power, is a question of political tact and judgment.

It is a piece of good fortune for his country if a monarch possess the judgment requisite for this—a good fortune that is temporary, it is true, like all human

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fortune. The possibility of establishing ministers in power who possess adequate qualifications must always be granted in the constitutional organism; but also the possibility of maintaining in office ministers who satisfy these requirements in face of occasional votes of an adverse majority and of the influence of courts and camarillas. This aim, so far as human imperfections in general allow its attainment, was approximately reached under the government of William I.

The opening of the Prussian Parliament was to follow immediately upon our arrival at Berlin, and the speech from the throne was deliberated upon at Prague. Thither came deputies of the Conservative group, whose ranks during the struggle had at times dwindled down to as few as eleven members, but by the election of July 3 had, under the effect produced by the first victories before Königgrätz, been reinforced to more than a hundred. The result would have been even more favourable to the government if the election had taken place a few days after the decisive battle; but even as it was, taken together with the enthusiastic disposition of the country, it was, at anyrate, adapted to inspire hopes of success not only in Conservatives but in reactionaries also. The strengthening of the position of the monarchy that had resulted from the parliamentary situation at the outbreak of the war, and the clumsy and ambitious obstinacy of the opposition, provided those whose aim was a return to absolutism, or at least a restoration on the lines of the Estates General, with a pretext for a suspension and revision of the Prussian constitution. It was not fashioned

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for an enlarged Prussia, still less for being fitted into the future constitution of Germany. The charter of the constitution itself contained an article (No. 118) which—owing its existence, as it did, to the influence of the national temper at the time of the drawing up of the constitution, and borrowed from the draft of 1848—justified the subordination of the Prussian constitution to a new German constitution that had yet to be devised. An opportunity was thus given of unhinging the constitution and the efforts of the majority during the conflict after parliamentary government, with a formal appearance of legality; and this lay at the root of the exertions of the Extreme Right and the members they sent as deputies to Prague.

Another opportunity of combining the settlement of international dissensions with that German question had fallen into the King's hands, when the Emperor Alexander, in 1863, at the time of the Polish rebellion and the attempt to surprise us at the Frankfort Diet of Princes, had in an autograph letter vigorously recommended an alliance between Prussia and Russia. The letter, written in the Emperor's delicate hand, over many closely-written pages, spun out at great length and in a style more declamatory than his pen possessed suggested Hamlet's words:

> "Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
> The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
> Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
> And by opposing end then?"

but suggested them in an affirmative instead of an interrogative sense. Its tenor was that the Emperor was

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tired of the chicaneries of the Western Powers and of Austria and Poland, and had determined to draw the sword and rid himself of them; appealing to the friendship of the King, and to their common interests, he invited him to joint action, on lines similar to but wider than those of the Alvensleben convention of February of the same year. It was difficult for the King, on the one hand, to send a refusal as his reply to his near relation and most intimate friend, or, on the other, to familiarise himself with the resolve to expose his country to the horrors of a great war, and force upon the state and the dynasty the risks contingent on such a course of action. Moreover, that strain in his private feelings which made him inclined to take part in the Frankfort Diet of Princes —I mean his sense of being closely bound up with every old princely house—ran counter in him to the temptation to yield to the appeal of his friend and nephew, and comply with the family traditions of Prussia and Russia, a compliance which must lead to a breach in his relations with the German confederation and the collective body of the German princely houses. In my report, which occupied me several days, I avoided laying stress on the aspect of affairs that would have been important in our internal policy, because I was not of opinion that a war waged in alliance with Russia against Austria and all the adversaries with whom we had to fight in 1866, would have brought us any nearer the fulfilment of our task as a nation. It is true that war may be used as a means of getting the better of internal difficulties—it is a device much resorted to, especially in French politics; but in Germany such a means would only have been practicable if the war in question lay

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in the line of the national development. To that end it would above all things have been necessary that it should not be carried on with Russian assistance, which public opinion even to this day condemns in an impolitic manner. German unity must be realised without any foreign influence, merely by Germany's own strength. Moreover, the conflict of mind under which the King laboured at the time I entered the ministry, even up to the resolve to abdicate, had considerably lost its influence over his resolutions since he had found ministers who were ready to represent his policy openly and without subterfuge. Since then he had acquired the conviction that the position of the Crown, if matters had come to the point of revolutionary outbreak, would have been stronger; the intimidation of the Queen and the ministers of the new era had lost its power. On the other hand, in my statement to him I did not conceal my estimate of the military strength that an alliance between Germany and Russia would have, particularly at the outset.

The geographical position of the three great Eastern Powers is of such a kind that each of them, as soon as it is attacked by the two others, finds itself strategically at a disadvantage, even if she have England or France as an ally in Western Europe. The isolated power would be most at a disadvantage if Austria were exposed to a Russo-German attack; least, if it were a case of Russia against Austria and Germany; but even Russia would at the outset of a war be in a serious plight in face of a combined advance of the two German powers upon the Bug. Her geographical position and ethnographical formation set Austria at a great disadvantage

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in the matter of war with the two neighbouring empires, for French assistance could scarcely arrive in time to restore the balance. But whether Austria succumbed at the outset to a coalition between Russia and Germany, or whether the alliance of her opponents were broken up by some clever treaty of peace between the three Emperors, or even merely weakened in consequence of some defeat of Austria, the preponderance of Russia and Germany would in any case be decisive. Granting equally good generalship and equal bravery in the great armies, a great strength of the German-Russian combination, if it holds firmly together from the outset, lies in the conformation of the individual territories of those Powers. But calculation upon military success and belief in it are in themselves uncertain, and will become still more so if the estimated strength on this side is not homogeneous, but rests upon alliances.

In my draft of the answer, which turned out still longer than the letter of the Emperor Alexander, stress was laid upon the fact that a joint war against the Western Powers must necessarily, in its final development, by reason of the geographical conditions and of France's craving for the Rhine countries, be reduced to a war between France and Prussia; that a Prusso-Russian initiative of the war would render our position worse in Germany; that Russia, being at a distance from the theatre of war, would suffer less of its miseries, while Prussia, on the other hand, would have to maintain not only her own but likewise the Russian forces; and that Russian policy would then—for, if my memory does not deceive me, this is the expression I used—be sitting on the longer arm of the lever, and, just as in the congress

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of Vienna, and with still greater weight, would be able, if we were victorious, to dictate even to us what form our peace should take, exactly as Austria could have done in 1859, in respect to our conditions of peace with France, if we had then entered into the war against France and Italy. I do not recall the text of my argument, although I had it again before me a few years ago with reference to our explanation with Russia on policy, and was happy to find that I then possessed sufficient energy to draw up with my own hand so long a minute in writing which the King could read—a manual labour which could not have been conducive to the success of my Gastein course. Although the King did not view the question from the German national point of view to the same degree as I did, he did not succumb to the temptation to ally himself with Russia in order to put a forcible end to the arrogance of Austrian policy, and of the majority in the Diet, and to the contempt which both showed for the Prussian Crown. If he agreed to the Russian demand we should probably, considering the rapidity of our mobilisation, the strength of the Russian army in Poland, and the military weakness of Austria at that time, have overrun Austria, with or without the help of Italy, whose covetousness was still unsatisfied, and before France could afford her effective help. If one could have been certain that the result of this overrunning would be an imperial triple alliance, on condition of letting Austria off easily, then possibly my judgment of the situation could not appropriately have been called accurate. But this certainty, in view of the divergent interests of Russia and Austria in the East, did not exist; it was hardly probable, and by no means

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in conformity with Russian policy, that a victorious Prusso-Russian coalition should act towards Austria with even the measure of forbearance which was contemplated on the Prussian side in 1866, in the interest of a possible future *rapprochement.* For this reason I was afraid that, in the event of our victory, we should not agree with Russia respecting the future of Austria, and that Russia herself, after further successes against France, would not be willing to resign the chance of keeping Prussia in a dependent position on her western boundary. Least of all could any help towards and national policy in the sense of Prussian hegemony have been expected from Russia. Tilsit, Erfurt, Olmütz and other historic memories said: *Vestigia terrent.* In short, I had not confidence enough in Gortchakoff's policy, to let us reckon on the same security that Alexander I afforded in 1813, until the questions of the future came to discussion at Vienna, as to what was to become of Poland and Saxony, whether Germany had sufficient protection against French invasions independently of Russian decisions, and whether Strasburg should become a fortress of the Confederation. Such were the varied considerations I had to bear in mind in order to decide upon the proposals I wished to lay before the King and the form in which they were to be drafted. I do not doubt that the time will come when our archives will be accessible to the public, even in respect to these transactions, whether or not in the meantime the proposal is carried out to destroy those documents which testify to my political activity.

The temptation had certainly been great for a monarch whose position was exposed to the extravagant attacks of the Radical party and to the pressure of Austrian

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diplomacy, not only in the national domain of the Frankfort Congress of Princes, but also in that of Poland, from the three great confederate Powers, England, France, and Austria.

That the King, in 1863, did not allow his deeply mortified feelings as monarch and as Prussian to overmaster political considerations shows how strong in him were the sentiment of national honour and sound common-sense in politics.

In 1866 the King could not easily make up his mind upon the question whether he should arbitrarily break down parliamentary resistance and prevent its recurrence, so weighty were the reasons against doing so. By the suspension and revision of the Constitution, by the humiliation of the Opposition in the Diet, an effectual weapon against Prussia in the struggles looming in the future would have been placed in the hands of all those who were discontented with the events of 1866 in Germany and Austria. One would have had to be prepared meanwhile to carry out, in opposition to the parliament and the press, a system of government in Prussia which would be combated by all the rest of Germany. Measures which we should have had to take against the press would have had no validity in Dessau; and Austria and South Germany would, meanwhile, have taken their revenge by assuming, on Liberal and National lines, the leadership which Prussia had forsaken. The National party in Prussia itself would have sympathised with the adversaries of the government. We could, indeed, have constitutionally gained an increase of strength for the

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monarchy within the amended boundaries of Prussia, but it would have been in the presence of fiercely dissentient domestic elements, to which the Opposition in the new provinces would have united itself. We should then have carried on a Prussian war of conquest, but the sinews of the national policy of Prussia would have been severed. In the struggle to create for the German nation, by means of unity, the possibility of an existence corresponding to its historical importance, lay the weightiest argument in justification of waging the German *"Bruderkrieg"*; the renewal of such a war would be unavoidable if the struggle between the German stocks was simply for the sake of strengthening the separate State of Prussia.

I do not consider absolutism by any means a form of government that is desirable or successful in Germany in the long run. The Prussian Constitution, disregarding a few meaningless articles translated from that of Belgium, is in the main reasonable. It has three factors, the King and two Chambers, each of which by its vote can prevent arbitrary alterations of the legal *status quo*. This is a just apportionment of legislative power, but if the latter is emancipated from the public criticism of the press and from parliamentary control, there is increased danger of its going astray. The absolutism of the Crown is just as little tenable as the absolutism of parliamentary majorities; the necessity for the agreement of both in every alteration of the legal *status quo* is just, and we did not need to make any important improvement in the Prussian Constitution. Government can be carried on with it, and the course of German policy would have been littered up if we had altered it in 1866. Before the victory I

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would never have mentioned the word "Indemnity";† but after the victory the King was in a position to make the concession magnanimously, and to conclude peace, not with his people—for it was never interrupted, as the course of the war showed—but with the section of the Opposition which had got out of harmony with the government, more from national than from party grounds.

Such were pretty nearly the thoughts and arguments with which, during the many hours' journey from Prague to Berlin, on August 4, I tried to combat the difficulties which his own views, but still more external influences, and especially the influence of the Conservative deputation, had left on the King's mind. To this was added a view of political affairs which made his Majesty regard a request for a bill of indemnity as an admission of a wrong committed.* I sought in vain to demolish this verbal and legal error by showing that in granting the indemnity there was nothing more than the recognition of the fact that the government and its royal chief, *rebus sic stantibus*, had acted correctly; the demand for the bill of indemnity was a desire for this recognition. In all constitutional life, in the scope it allows to governments, it is a necessary condition that they cannot always find indicated in the Constitution a compulsory course for every situation. The King adhered to his dislike to indemnity; while, for our parliamentary opponents,

† That is, indemnity for unconstitutional action on the part of ministers during the "Conflict" period.

* The statement in Roon's *Denkwürdigkeiten* (*Deutsche Revue*, 1891, vol. I. p. 133; edition in book form, II. 482): "To secure Bismarck's adhesion it was in any case decisive that he knew accurately the placable views of his King," is erroneous.

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of whom at most only those who afterwards formed the party of Freethought were malevolent, while the others were merely mistaken, it appeared to me necessary to build a golden bridge, either in policy or in words, in order to restore the internal peace of Prussia, and from this solid Prussian basis to continue the German policy of the King. This interview, which lasted several hours, was very trying to me, because I had to be on my guard all the time. It took place in a railway *coupé* for three, with the King and the Crown Prince. But the latter did not support me, although by the mobile expression of his features he, at all events, strengthened me in regard to his father by the manifestation of his full agreement.

I had been in correspondence from Nikolsburg with the other ministers, so that the draft of the speech from the throne had been drawn up, and had been accepted by his Majesty, with the exception of the clause relating to the indemnity. At last, however, the King reluctantly assented to that also, and thus it was possible to open the Diet on August 5 with a speech from the throne which announced that the representatives of the country were to proceed to an *ex post facto* approval of the administration carried on without an Appropriation Act. *In verbis simus faciles!*

The next business was the regulation of our relations to the various German states with whom we had been at war. We might have done without annexations for Prussia and have sought compensation for them in the Constitution of the Confederation. But his Majesty had no stronger faith in the practical effects of clauses of the Constitution than in the old Federal Diet, and insisted

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on the enlargement of Prussia in order to fill up the gap between the east and west provinces, and make Prussia a tenable territory in a ring-fence in case of the failure, sooner or later, of the national reconstruction. In the annexation of Hanover and the Electorate of Hesse, therefore, the question was one of the establishment of a connexion effective in all eventualities between the two divisions of the monarchy. The difficulties of the customs connexion between our two territories, and the attitude of Hanover in the last war, had again made evident the need of absolute territorial cohesion in the north, under one hand. In future wars, with Austria or other countries, we ought not to be again exposed to the possibility of having one or two hostile bodies of good troops in our rear. The apprehension that matters might some day take this shape was heightened by the excessive idea which King George V. entertained of his own mission and that of his dynasty. One is not every day in a position to remedy a perilous situation of the kind, and the statesman who is placed by circumstances in a position to do so, and does not avail himself of it, takes a great responsibility upon himself; for international policy and the right of the German nation to live and breathe as a nation undivided cannot be judged according to principles of private right. The King of Hanover sent to Nikolsburg, by an aide-de-camp, a letter to the King, which I begged his Majesty not to receive, for we had to keep in our eye the point of view, not of good fellowship, but of politics; and the independence of Hanover, with the power of leading its troops into the field for or against Prussia according to the judgment of the Sovereign of the day, placed at its disposal by

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international law, was incompatible with carrying out German unity. The durability of treaties alone, without the guarantee of adequate power at home under the lead of the Prince, never sufficed to secure for the German nation peace and unity in the Empire.

I succeeded in getting the King away from the idea of treating with Hanover and Hesse on the basis of the dismemberment of these lands, and of confederation with their former sovereigns as partial princes of a residue. If the Elector had retained Fulda and Hanau, and George V. Kalenburg and Lüneburg with the prospect of succession in Brunswick, neither the Hanoverians and Hessians, nor the two Princes themselves, would have been contented members of the North German Confederation. This plan would have given us discontented confederation, with a tendency to *"Rheinbündelei"* for the sake of winning back their lost territory.

Likewise such unconditional devotion to Austria as Nassau had shown was a dangerous phenomenon in the immediate neighbourhood of Coblenz, especially in the event of alliances between France and Austria, such as had come into menacing prospect during the Crimean war and the Polish complications of 1863. His Majesty had inherited his dislike of Nassau from his father. Frederick William III. used to travel through the Duchy without seeing the Duke. The Duke's contingent had made itself particularly disagreeable in Prussia during the time of the Confederation of the Rhine, and King William I. was prejudiced against concessions to the Duke by the vehement opposition made by deputations of previous subjects of Nassau, whose standing cry was: "Save us from the Prince and his huntsmen!"

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There remained treaties of peace to be concluded with Saxony and the South German states. Herr von Varnbüler showed the same vivacity of temperament as in the preparations for war, and was the first with whom a conclusion was arrived at.[1] It was a question among other things whether, as Würtemberg had taken possession of Prussian Hohenzollern, we should now, as the King desired, turn the tables and demand an enlargement of Hohenzollern at the expense of Würtemberg. I could not see any advantage either for Prussia or for our national future in doing this, and, in general, regarded the principle of retaliation as no sound basis for our policy,[2] since even where our feelings had been injured, it ought to be guided, not by our own irritation, but by consideration of its object. Just because Varnbüler had some diplomatic sins towards us to his account, he was a useful intermediary for me; and by agreeing to forget the past, through the example of Würtemberg in concluding its treaty (August 13), I gained the way to the others.

I do not know whether Roggenbach was acting under the orders of the Grand Duke of Baden in the conclusion of peace, when he represented to me that Bavaria was a hindrance to German unification owing to its size, and would more easily fit into a future reconstruction of Germany if it were reduced, and that it was therefore advisable to restore a better balance of power in South Germany by increasing Baden, and bringing it into immediate juxtaposition with Prussia by the incorporation with it of the Palatinate; in which connexion further

[1] See above, p. 234. [2] See above, p. 231.

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changes, in accordance with the desire of Prussia to recover the dynastic family domains of Anspach-Baireuth, including the absorption of Würtemberg, were kept in view. I did not accept this suggestion, but declined it *a limine*. Even if I had been willing to consider it exclusively on the ground of expediency, it still betrayed a want of a just eye for the future and an obscuration of the political view by the domestic policy of Baden. The difficulty of compelling Bavaria, against her will, to enter a constitution of the Empire which did not suit her would have remained the same even if the Palatinate had been handed over to Baden; and it is a question whether the Palatinate people would willingly have accepted this connexion in exchange for that with Bavaria. When there was some talk in passing about compensating Hesse for its territory north of the Main by Bavarian territory in the direction of Aschaffenburg, protests reached me from the latter district which, although they came from a strictly Catholic population, amounted to this, that if the undersigned could not remain Bavarians they would rather become Prussians, but disliked being transferred from Bavaria to Hesse. They appeared to be governed by a consideration of the rank of the sovereigns, and by the order of voting in the Federal Diet, in which Bavaria ranked before Hesse. In the same line of ideas I remember from my Frankfort time a saying of a Prussian soldier to one from a small state: "You shut up; why, you have not even got a King." I regarded alterations of state boundaries in South Germany as no step towards unification of the whole.

A reduction of Bavaria in the north would have been against the King's wish at that time, which was to recover

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Anspach and Baireuth in their old extent. But this plan, however dear to my honoured and beloved master, was as little in accordance with my political views as the Baden one, and I successfully resisted it. In the autumn of 1866 it was not yet possible to forecast the future attitude of Austria. The jealousy of France towards us was admitted, and no one knew better than I the disappointment of Napoleon at our successes in Bohemia. He had reckoned with certainty that Austria would beat us, and that we should be reduced to purchase his mediation. Now, if the efforts of France to make up for this error and its consequences had succeeded by means of the irritation necessarily caused in Vienna by our victory, the question would have come to the fore in many German courts whether, in conjunction with Austria, and as it were in a second Silesian war, they wished to renew the struggle against us or not. That Bavaria and Saxony would succumb to this temptation was possible, but that a Bavaria mutilated as Roggenbach wanted would have sought revenge against us in a junction with Austria was probable.

Such a junction would perhaps have embraced a wider area than the Guelf legion, which under French protection took up a position against us shortly afterwards. That with the exception of a few individuals who had passed out of mind it had ceased to appear on the scene in 1870 is largely due to the circumstance that certain confidential persons acquainted with the agreement drawn up in Hanover kept us informed of the preparations that went on, even down to minute

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details, and offered to frustrate the entire combination if the emoluments of their former posts in Hanover were secured to them. I felt apprehensive at that time, from correspondence intercepted by order of the courts, that we might find it necessary, in view of Guelfic enterprises, to proceed to reprisals which, looking to the risk of war, could not prove other than severe. It must be remembered that we did not then feel sure enough of victory over France, considering what the French army had done in the past, to neglect anything that might prevent our position from being made more difficult. I therefore agreed with the intermediaries, who approached me closer, that their wishes should be fulfilled if they carried out their promises; and indicated as a note of this condition the question whether we should not be compelled to shoot a Hanoverian for fighting against German forces. No disturbances therefore occurred in the country, and after the outbreak of the war the departure of Guelfs to France, by land and water, was confined to a few who were already compromised. From the behaviour of the Hanoverian troops in the war, it is not probable that a Guelf insurrection at home would have been able to gain many adherents, at least so long as our progress in France was victorious. What would have happened if we had returned beaten and pursued through Hanover I leave untouched. But a prophylactic policy must take even such possibilities into consideration; at all events I was resolved, under stress of war, to advise the King to adopt every measure of active defence which the instinct of political self-preservation can suggest. And even if only a few severe and apparently cruel punishments had become necessary, such acts of violence against German

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fellow-countrymen, however much they might be justified by the risks of war, would for generations afterwards have been a hindrance in the way of reconciliation and a pretext for persecutions. It therefore seemed to me important to prevent such possibilities in good time.

The struggles during the previous winter with the King, who did not want war, and during the campaign, with the military men, who saw only Austria, not the other Powers of Europe, before them, and again with the King respecting the conclusion of peace, and then again respecting the bill of indemnity, had so exhausted me that I needed rest and recreation. I went first of all on September 26 to my cousin, Count Bismarck-Bohlen at Karlsburg, and then on October 6 to Putbus, where I fell very ill at the inn. Prince and Princess Putbus showed me most kind hospitality in a cottage that had remained standing close to the castle, which had been burnt down. After the first severe attack had passed away I was able to take affairs again in hand by correspondence with Savigny. As the last Prussian envoy to the Federal Diet he naturally inherited the special branch of the work dealing with the German policy then in the foreground. He brought the negotiations with Saxony to a conclusion, which had not been reached before my departure. Their result is *publici juris,* and I can abstain from criticising them. The military independence of Saxony was afterwards, through the mediation of General von Stosch, further developed by his Majesty's personal decisions beyond what was arranged in the treaty.

The prudent and honourable policy of the last two

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Saxon kings has justified these concessions—that is to say, as long as the existing Prusso-Austrian friendship can be maintained. It is upon grounds due to the records of past history and religion, on human nature, and especially on the traditions of the sovereigns, that the close league between Prussia and Austria, made in 1879, exercises a concentrating pressure on Bavaria and Saxony, which is stronger in proportion as the German element in Austria, high and low, is careful to foster its relations with the Habsburg dynasty. The parliamentary excesses of the German element in Austria, and their ultimate influence on the policy of the dynasty, threatened to weaken the force of the German national element in this direction, and not alone in Austria. The *doctrinaire* blunders of parliamentary groups are as a rule favourable to the efforts of women and priests who dabble in politics.

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CHAPTER XXII.

THE EMS TELEGRAM.

On July 2, 1870, the Spanish ministry decided in favour of the accession to that throne of Leopold, Hereditary Prince of Hohenzollern. This gave the first stimulus in the field of international law to the subsequent military question, but still only in the form of a specifically Spanish matter. It was hard to find in the law of nations a pretext for France to interfere with the freedom of Spain to choose a King; after people in Paris had made up their minds to war with Prussia, this was sought for artificially in the name Hohenzollern, which in itself had nothing more menacing to France than any other German name. On the contrary, it might have been assumed, in Spain as well as in Germany, that Prince Hohenzollern, on account of his personal and family connexions in Paris, would be a *persona grata* beyond many another German Prince. I remember that on the night after the battle of Sedan I was riding along the road to Donchéry, in thick darkness, with a number of our officers, following the King in his journey round Sedan. In reply to a question from someone in the company I talked about the preliminaries to the war, and mentioned at the same time that I had thought Prince Leopold would be no unwelcome neighbour in Spain to the Emperor Napoleon, and would travel to

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Madrid *via* Paris, in order to get into touch with the imperial French policy, forming as it did a part of the conditions under which he would have had to govern Spain. I said: "We should have been much more justified in dreading a close understanding between the Spanish and French crowns than in hoping for the restoration of a Spanish-German anti-French constellation after the analogy of Charles V.; a king of Spain can only carry out Spanish policy, and the Prince by assuming the crown of the country would become a Spaniard." To my surprise there came from the darkness behind me a vigorous rejoinder from the Prince of Hohenzollern, of whose presence I had not the least idea; he protested strongly against the possibility of presuming any French sympathies in him. This protest in the midst of the battlefield of Sedan was natural for a German officer and a Hohenzollern Prince, and I could only answer that the Prince, as King of Spain, could have allowed himself to be guided by Spanish interests only, and prominent among these, in view of strengthening his new kingdom, would have been a soothing treatment of his powerful neighbour on the Pyrenees. I made my apology to the Prince for the expression I had uttered while unaware of his presence.

This episode, introduced before its time, affords evidence as to the conception I had formed of the whole question. I regarded it as a Spanish and not as a German one, even though I delighted at seeing the German name of Hohenzollern active in representing monarchy in Spain, and did not fail to calculate all the possible consequences from the point of view of our interests—a duty which is incumbent on a foreign

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minister when anything of similar importance occurs in another state. My immediate thought was more of the economic than of the political relations in which a Spanish King of German extraction could be serviceable. For Spain I anticipated from the personal character of the Prince, and from his family relations, tranquillising and consolidating results, which I had no reason to grudge the Spaniards. Spain is among the few countries which, by their geographical position and political necessities, have no reason to pursue an anti-German policy; besides which, she is well adapted, by the economic relations of supply and demand, for an extensive trade with Germany. An element friendly to us in the Spanish government would have been an advantage which in the course of German policy there appeared no reason to reject *a limine*, unless the apprehension that France might be dissatisfied was to be allowed to rank as one. If Spain had developed again more vigorously than hitherto has been the case, the fact that Spanish diplomacy was friendly towards us might have been useful to us in time of peace; but it did not seem to me probable that the King of Spain, on the outbreak of the war between Germany and France, which was evidently coming sooner or later, would, with the best will in the world, be in a position to prove his sympathy with Germany by an attack on France or a demonstration against her; and the conduct of Spain after the outbreak of the war which we had drawn upon us by the complaisance of German princes showed the accuracy of my doubt. The chivalrous Cid would have called France to account for interference in Spain's free choice of a king, and not have left the vindication of Spanish independence to foreigners.

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The nation, formerly so powerful by land and sea, cannot at the present day hold the cognate population of Cuba in check; and how could one expect her to attack a Power like France from affection towards us? No Spanish government, and least of all an alien king, would possess power enough in the country to send even a regiment to the Pyrenees out of affection towards Germany. Politically I was tolerably indifferent to the entire question. Prince Anthony was more inclined than myself to carry it peacefully to the desired goal. The memoirs of his Majesty the King of Roumania are not accurately informed as regards details of the ministerial co-operation in the question. The ministerial council in the palace which he mentions did not take place. Prince Anthony was living as the King's guest in the palace, and had invited him and some of the ministers to dinner. I scarcely think that the Spanish question was discussed at table. If the Duke of Gramont[1] labours to adduce proof that I did not stand aloof from and averse to the Spanish proposal, I find no reason to contradict him. I can no longer recall the text of my letter to Marshal Prim, which the Duke has heard mentioned; if I drew it up myself, about which I am equally uncertain, I should hardly have called the Hohenzollern candidature *"une excellente chose:"* the expression is not natural to me. That I regarded it as *"opportune,"* not *"à un moment donné,"* but in principle and in time of peace is correct. I had not the slightest doubt in the matter that the grandson of the Murats, a favourite at the French

[1] Gramont, *La France et la Prusse avant la guerre.* Paris, 1872, p. 21.

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Court, would secure the goodwill of France towards his country.

The intervention of France at its beginning concerned Spanish and not Prussian affairs; the garbling of the matter in the Napoleonic policy, by virtue of which the question was to become a Prussian one, was internationally unjustifiable and exasperating, and proved to me that the moment had arrived when France sought a quarrel against us and was ready to seize any pretext that seemed available. I regarded the French intervention in the first instance as an injury, and consequently as an insult to Spain, and expected that the Spanish sense of honour would resist this encroachment. Later on, when the turn of affairs showed that, by her encroachment on Spanish independence, France intended to threaten us with war, I waited for some days expecting that the Spanish declaration of war against France would follow that of the French against us. I was not prepared to see a self-assertive nation like Spain stand quiet behind the Pyrenees with ordered arms, while the Germans were engaged in a deadly struggle against France on behalf of Spain's independence and freedom to choose her king. The Spanish sense of honour which proved so sensitive in the Carlist question simply left us in the lurch in 1870. Probably in both cases the sympathies and international ties of the Republican parties were decisive.

The first demands of France respecting the candidature for the Spanish throne, and they were unjustifiable, had been presented on July 4, and answered by our Foreign Office evasively, though in accordance with truth, that the *ministry* knew nothing about the matter. This

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was correct so far, that the question of Prince Leopold's acceptance of his election had been treated by his Majesty simply as a family matter, which in no way concerned either Prussia or the North German Confederation, and which affected solely the personal relations between the Commander-in-Chief and a German officer, and those between the head of the family and, not the royal family of Prussia but, the entire family of Hohenzollern, or all the bearers of that name.

In France, however, a *casus belli* was being sought against Prussia which should be as free as possible from German national colouring; and it was thought one had been discovered in the dynastic sphere by the accession to the Spanish throne of a candidate bearing the name of Hohenzollern. In this the overrating of the military superiority of France and the underrating of the national feeling in Germany was clearly the chief reason why the tenability of this pretext was not examined either with honesty or judgment. The German national outburst which followed the French declaration, and resembled a stream bursting its sluices, was a surprise to French politicians. They lived, calculated, and acted on recollections of the Confederation of the Rhine, supported by the attitude of certain West German ministers; also by Ultramontane influences, in the hope that the conquests of France, *"gesta Dei per Francos,"* would make it easier in Germany to draw further consequences from the Vatican council, with the support of an alliance with Catholic Austria. The Ultramontane tendencies of French policy were favourable to it in Germany and disadvantageous in Italy; the alliance with the latter being finally wrecked by the refusal of France to evacuate

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Rome. In the belief that the French army was superior the pretext for war was lugged out, as one may say, by the hair; and instead of making Spain responsible for its reputed anti-French election of a king, they attacked the German Prince who had not refused to relieve the need of the Spaniards, in the way they themselves wished, by the appointment of a useful king, and one who would presumably be regarded as *persona grata* in Paris; and the King of Prussia, whom nothing beyond his family name and his position as a German fellow-countryman had brought into connexion with this Spanish affair. In the very fact that the French cabinet ventured to call Prussian policy to account respecting the acceptance of the election, and to do so in a form which, in the interpretation put upon it by the French papers, became a public threat, lay a piece of international impudence which, in my opinion, rendered it impossible for us to draw back one single inch. The insulting character of the French demand was enhanced, not only by the threatening challenges of the French press, but also by the discussions in parliament and the attitude taken by the ministry of Gramont and Ollivier upon these manifestations. The utterance of Gramont in the session of the *"Corps Législatif"* of July 6:—

"We do not believe that respect for the rights of a neighbouring people binds us to suffer a foreign Power to set one of its Princes on the throne of Charles V. . . . This event will not come to pass, of that we are quite certain. . . . Should it prove otherwise we shall know how to fulfil our duty without shrinking and without weakness"—

this utterance was itself an official international threat,

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with the hand on the sword hilt. The phrase, *La Prusse cane* (Prussia climbs down), served in the press to illustrate the range of the parliamentary proceedings of July 6 and 7; which, in my feeling, rendered all compliance incompatible with our sense of national honour.

On July 12 I decided to hurry off from Varzin to Ems to discuss with his Majesty about summoning the *Reichstag* for the purpose of the mobilisation. As I passed through Wussow my friend Mulert, the old clergyman, stood before the parsonage door and warmly greeted me; my answer from the open carriage was a thrust in carte and tierce in the air, and he clearly understood that I believed I was going to war. As I entered the courtyard of my house at Berlin, and before leaving the carriage, I received telegrams from which it appeared that the King was continuing to treat with Benedetti, even after the French threats and outrages in parliament and in the press, and not referring him with calm reserve to his ministers. During dinner, at which Moltke and Roon were present, the announcement arrived from the embassy in Paris that the Prince of Hohenzollern had renounced his candidature in order to prevent the war with which France threatened us. My first idea was to retire from the service, because, after all the insolent challenges which had gone before, I perceived in this extorted submission a humiliation of Germany for which I did not desire to be responsible. This impression of a wound to our sense of national honour by the compulsory withdrawal so dominated me that I had already decided to announce my retirement at Ems. I considered this humiliation before France and her swaggering demonstrations as worse than that of Olmütz, for

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which the previous history on both sides, and our want of preparation for war at the time, will always be a valid excuse. I took it for granted that France would lay the Prince's renunciation to her account as a satisfactory success, with the feeling that a threat of war, even though it had taken the form of international insult and mockery, and though the pretext for war against Prussia had been dragged in by the head and shoulders, was enough to compel her to draw back, even in a just cause; and that even the North German Confederation did not feel strong enough to protect the national honour and independence against French arrogance. I was very much depressed, for I saw no means of repairing the corroding injury I dreaded to our national position from a timorous policy, unless by picking quarrels clumsily and seeking them artificially. I saw by that time that war was a necessity, which we could no longer avoid with honour. I telegraphed to my people at Varzin not to pack up or start, for I should be back again in a few days. I now believed in peace; but as I would not represent the attitude by which this peace had been purchased, I gave up the journey to Ems and asked Count Eulenburg to go thither and represent my opinion to his Majesty. In the same sense I conversed with the Minister of War, von Roon: we had got our slap in the face from France, and had been reduced, by our complaisance, to look like seekers of a quarrel if we entered upon war, the only way in which we could wipe away the stain. My position was now untenable, solely because, during his course at the baths, the King, under pressure of threats, had given audience to the French ambassador for four consecutive days, and had exposed his royal person to

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insolent treatment from this foreign agent without ministerial assistance. Through this inclination to take state business upon himself in person and alone, the King had been forced into a position which I could not defend; in my judgment his Majesty while at Ems ought to have refused every business communication from the French negotiator, who was not on the same footing with him, and to have referred him to the department in Berlin. The department would then have had to obtain his Majesty's decision by a representation at Ems, or, if dilatory treatment were considered useful, by a report in writing. But his Majesty, however careful in his usual respect for departmental relations, was too fond not indeed of deciding important questions personally, but, at all events, of discussing them, to make a proper use of the shelter with which the Sovereign is purposely surrounded against importunities and inconvenient questionings and demands. That the King, considering the consciousness of his supreme dignity which he possessed in so high a degree, did not withdraw at the very beginning from Benedetti's importunity was to be attributed for the most part to the influence exercised upon him by the Queen, who was at Coblenz close by. He was seventy-three years old, a lover of peace, and disinclined to risk the laurels of 1866 in a fresh struggle; but when he was free from the feminine influence, the sense of honour of the heir of Frederick the Great and of a Prussian officer always remained paramount. Against the opposition of his consort, due to her natural feminine timidity and lack of national feeling, the King's power of resistance was weakened by his knightly regard for the lady and his kingly consideration for a Queen, and

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especially for his own Queen. I have been told that Queen Augusta implored her husband with tears, before his departure from Ems to Berlin, to bear in mind Jena and Tilsit and avert war. I consider the statement authentic, even to the tears.

Having decided to resign, in spite of the remonstrances which Roon made against it, I invited him and Moltke to dine with me alone on the 13th, and communicated to them at table my views and projects for doing so. Both were greatly depressed, and reproached me indirectly with selfishly availing myself of my greater facility for withdrawing from service. I maintained the position that I could not offer up my sense of honour to politics, that both of them, being professional soldiers and consequently without freedom of choice, need not take the same point of view as a responsible Foreign Minister. During our conversation I was informed that a telegram from Ems, in cipher, if I recollect rightly, of about 200 "groups," was being deciphered. When the copy was handed to me it showed that Abeken had drawn up and signed the telegram at his Majesty's command, and I read it out to my guests,* whose dejection was so great that they turned

* The telegram, handed in at Ems on July 13, 1870, at 3.50 p.m. and received in Berlin at 6.9, ran as deciphered:

"His Majesty writes to me: 'Count Benedetti spoke to me on the promenade, in order to demand from me, finally in a very importunate manner, that I should authorise him to telegraph at once that I bound myself for all future time never again to give my consent if the Hohenzollerns should renew their candidature. I refused at last somewhat sternly, as it is neither right nor possible to undertake engagements of this kind *à tout jamais*. Naturally I told him that I had as yet received no news, and as he was earlier informed about Paris and Madrid than myself, he could clearly see

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away from food and drink. On a repeated examination of the document I lingered upon the authorisation of his Majesty, which included a command, immediately to communicate Benedetti's fresh demand and its rejection both to our ambassadors and to the press. I put a few questions to Moltke as to the extent of his confidence in the state of our preparations, especially as to the time they would still require in order to meet this sudden risk of war. He answered that if there was to be war he expected no advantage to us by deferring its outbreak; and even if we should not be strong enough at first to protect all the territories on the left bank of the Rhine against French invasion, our preparations would nevertheless soon overtake those of the French, while at a later period this advantage would be diminished; he regarded a rapid outbreak as, on the whole, more favourable to us than delay.

In view of the attitude of France, our national sense of honour compelled us, in my opinion, to go to war; and if we did not act according to the demands of this feeling, we should lose, when on the way to its completion, the

that my government once more had no hand in the matter.' His Majesty has since received a letter from the Prince. His Majesty having told Count Benedetti that he was awaiting news from the Prince, has decided, with reference to the above demand, upon the representation of Count Eulenburg and myself, not to receive Count Benedetti again, but only to let him be informed through an aide-de-camp: That his Majesty had now received from the Prince confirmation of the news which Benedetti had already received from Paris, and had nothing further to say to the ambassador. His Majesty leaves it to your Excellency whether Benedetti's fresh demand and its rejection should not be at once communicated both to our ambassadors and to the press."

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entire impetus towards our national development won in 1866, while the German national feeling south of the Main, aroused by our military successes in 1866, and shown by the readiness of the southern states to enter the alliances, would have to grow cold again. The German feeling, which in the southern states lived along with the individual and dynastic state feeling, had, up to 1866, silenced its political conscience to a certain degree with the fiction of a collective Germany under the leadership of Austria, partly from South German preference for the old imperial state, partly in the belief of her military superiority to Prussia. After events had shown the incorrectness of that calculation, the very helplessness in which the South German states had been left by Austria at the conclusion of peace was a motive for the political Damascus that lay between Varnbüler's *"Væ victis"* and the willing conclusion of the offensive and defensive alliance with Prussia. It was confidence in the Germanic power developed by means of Prussia, and the attraction which is inherent in a brave and resolute policy if it is successful, and then proceeds within reasonable and honourable limits. This nimbus had been won by Prussia; it would have been lost irrevocably, or at all events for a long time, if in a question of national honour the opinion gained ground among the people that the French insult, *La Prusse cane,* had a foundation in fact.

In the same psychological train of thought in which during the Danish war in 1864 I desired, for political reasons, that precedence should be given not to the old Prussian, but to the Westphalian battalions, who so far had had no opportunity of proving their courage under Prussian leadership, and regretted that Prince Frederick

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Charles had acted contrary to my wish, did I feel convinced that the gulf, which diverse dynastic and family influences and different habits of life had in the course of history created between the south and north of the Fatherland, could not be more effectually bridged over than by a joint national war against the neighbour who had been aggresive for many centuries. I remembered that even in the short period from 1813 to 1815, from Leipzig and Hanau to Belle-Alliance, the joint victorious struggle against France had rendered it possible to put an end to the opposition between a yielding Rhine-Confederation policy and the German national impetus of the days between the Vienna congress and the Mainz commission of enquiry, days marked by the names of Stein, Görres, Jahn, Wartburg, up to the crime of Sand. The blood shed in common, from the day when the Saxons came over at Leipzig down to their participation at Belle-Alliance under English command, had fostered a consciousness before which the recollections of the Rhine-Confederation were blotted out. The historical development in this direction was interrupted by the anxiety aroused by the over-haste of the national craving for the stability of state institutions.

This retrospect strengthened me in my conviction, and the political considerations in respect to the South German states proved applicable likewise, *mutatis mutandis,* to our relations with the populations of Hanover, Hesse, and Schleswig-Holstein. That this view was correct is shown by the satisfaction with which, at the present day, after a lapse of twenty years, not only the Holsteiners, but likewise the people of the Hanse towns remember the heroic deeds of their sons in 1870. All

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these considerations, conscious and unconscious, strengthened my opinion that war could be avoided only at the cost of the honour of Prussia and of the national confidence in it. Under this conviction I made use of the royal authorisation communicated to me through Abeken, to publish the contents of the telegram; and in the presence of my two guests I reduced the telegram by striking out words, but without adding or altering, to the following form: "After the news of the renunciation of the hereditary Prince of Hohenzollern had been officially communicated to the imperial government of France by the royal government of Spain, the French ambassador at Ems further demanded of his Majesty the King that he would authorise him to telegraph to Paris that his Majesty the King bound himself for all future time never again to give his consent if the Hohenzollerns should renew their candidature. His Majesty the King thereupon decided not to receive the French ambassador again, and sent to tell him through the aide-de-camp on duty that his Majesty had nothing further to communicate to the ambassador." The difference in the effect of the abbreviated text of the Ems telegram as compared with that produced by the original was not the result of stronger words but of the form, which made this announcement appear decisive, while Abeken's version would only have been regarded as a fragment of a negotiation still pending, and to be continued at Berlin.

After I had read out the concentrated edition to my two guests, Moltke remarked: "Now it has a different ring; it sounded before like a parley; now it is like a flourish in answer to a challenge." I went on to ex-

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plain: "If in execution of his Majesty's order I at once communicate this text, which contains no alteration in or addition to the telegram, not only to the newspapers, but also by telegraph to all our embassies, it will be known in Paris before midnight, and not only on account of its contents, but also on account of the manner of its distribution, will have the effect of a red rag upon the Gallic bull. Fight we must if we do not want to act the part of the vanquished without a battle. Success, however, essentially depends upon the impressions which the origination of the war makes upon us and others; it is important that we should be the party attacked, and this Gallic overweening and touchiness will make us if we announce in the face of Europe, so far as we can without the speaking-trumpet of the *Reichstag,* that we fearlessly meet the public threats of France."

This explanation brought about in the two generals a revulsion to a more joyous mood, the liveliness of which surprised me. They had suddenly recovered their pleasure in eating and drinking and spoke in a more cheerful vein. Roon said: "Our God of old lives still and will not let us perish in disgrace." Moltke so far relinquished his passive equanimity that, glancing up joyously towards the ceiling and abandoning his usual punctiliousness of speech, he smote his hand upon his breast and said: "If I may but live to lead our armies in such a war, then the devil may come directly afterwards and fetch away the 'old carcass.'" He was less robust at that time than afterwards, and doubted whether he would survive the hardships of the campaign.

How keenly he wanted to put in practice his military and strategic tastes and ability I observed not only on

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this occasion, but also in the days before the outbreak of the Bohemian war. In both cases I found my military colleague in the King's service changed from his usual dry and silent habit, cheerful, lively, I might even say merry. In the June night of 1866, when I had invited him for the purpose of ascertaining whether the march of the army could not be begun twenty-four hours sooner, he answered in the affirmative and was pleasantly excited by the hastening of the struggle. As he left my wife's drawing-room with elastic step, he turned round at the door and asked me in a serious tone: "Do you know that the Saxons have blown up† the bridge at Dresden?" Upon my expression of amazement and regret he replied: "Yes, with water, for the dust." An inclination to innocent jokes very seldom, in official relations like ours, broke through his reserve. In both cases his love of combat and delight in battles were a great support to me in carrying out the policy I regarded as necessary, in opposition to the intelligible and justifiable aversion in a most influential quarter. It proved inconvenient to me in 1867, in the Luxemburg question, and in 1875 and afterwards on the question whether it was desirable, as regards a war which we should probably have to face sooner or later, to bring it on *anticipando* before the adversary could improve his preparations. I have always opposed the theory which says "Yes;" not only at the Luxemburg period, but likewise subsequently for twenty years, in the conviction that even victorious wars cannot be justified unless they are forced upon one, and that one cannot see the cards of Providence far

† Play on the word *gesprengt*.

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enough ahead to anticipate historical development according to one's own calculation. It is natural that in the staff of the army not only younger active officers, but likewise experienced strategists, should feel the need of turning to account the efficiency of the troops led by them, and their own capacity to lead, and of making them prominent in history. It would be a matter of regret if this effect of the military spirit did not exist in the army; the task of keeping its results within such limits as the nations' need of peace can justly claim is the duty of the political, not the military, heads of the state. That at the time of the Luxemburg question, during the crisis of 1875, invented by Gortchakoff and France, and even down to the most recent times, the staff and its leaders have allowed themselves to be led astray and to endanger peace, lies in the very spirit of the institution, which I would not forego. It only becomes dangerous under a monarch whose policy lacks sense of proportion and power to resist one-sided and constitutionally unjustifiable influences.

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